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The Early Lives of St Serafim of Sarov, 1840-49
the Making of a Modern Saint

The Early *Lives* of St Serafim of Sarov, 1840-49: the Making of a Modern Saint

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Abstract

This dissertation is a study of the early *Lives* of Serafim of Sarov (1754–1833), published in the 1840s by three monastic contemporaries, the Hieromonks Sergii (1841), Georgii (1844) and Ioasaf (1849). It analyses their form, content and publication history to understand how Serafim came to be constructed as a saint and what personal, cultural, political and religious factors shaped the narratives that were eventually accepted for publication. It examines the modernity of these early *Lives*, through which Serafim was elevated to sainthood. The reign of Nicholas I (r. 1825–55) was characterised by the relationship between faith and nationalism, which was reflected by the authors (and editors) in the early *Lives*. Russia experienced a religious revival at the turn of the nineteenth century, which was reflective of a modern phenomenon of religious de-privatisation, rather than evidence of a reactionary tendency. During the Nicholaevan era, nationalism was expressed through both cultural and political variants. On the one hand, church and secular intellectuals sought to renew Russia by harnessing the revived ascetic spirituality. On the other, it was a political project to maintain the autocratic rule of Nicholas I, buttressed by a traditional conception of Orthodoxy. By reflecting both forms of nationalism, the early *Lives* produced an image of Serafim that was emblematic of Russia's modernity and worthy of veneration. This dissertation is split into three chapters: Chapter One presents the form and content of the early *Lives*, alongside their publication history, to reveal the use of an archaic form in the contests of authority of those involved in their publication; Chapter Two shows how the symbiotic relationship between faith and cultural nationalism represented a modern dynamic that found expression in Serafim's early *Lives*. Chapter Three examines how the early *Lives* reflected political nationalism as encapsulated by the ideology of Official Nationality.

Dedication and Acknowledgements

This dissertation is dedicated to Giorgio Nocent, without whom it would not have been started or completed.

I am indebted to the advice and continued support of Dr Ruth Coates, whose expert supervision assisted my return to academia after a decade in the legal world. Our conversations in 17 Woodland Road and in the snows of Iași, Romania, were illuminating and the source of many of the ideas in the dissertation.

I thank Dr Claire Knight for her careful and considered comments on the drafts, which have been instrumental to structuring and refining this dissertation.

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Finally, I thank Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, who kindly allowed me to enter his home and discuss the progress of this research. His advice and directions were, as can be expected, insightful and valuable to my work.

Author's declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: PETER FLEW DATE: 22 SEPTEMBER 2019

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'И как прекрасна ты, Русь, когда, полная одним чувством, согласно подымаешься ты, единственная несравненная в своей истинной сущности!'[1]

Introduction

1. St. Serafim of Sarov and His Early *Lives*

In the early twentieth century, Serafim of Sarov (1754–1833) was canonised as a saint amid great pomp and ceremony.[2] He was a modern saint, characterised by Dmitrii Merezhkovskii in 1908 as Russia's 'last' (*poslednii sviatoi*).[3] This dissertation examines Serafim's elevation to sainthood. It studies the origins of Serafim's construction as a saint in the 1840s and explores what modern sainthood signified in nineteenth-century Russia.

Serafim was born as Prokhor Moshnin in 1754, the son of merchants in Kursk.[4] He embarked on a life of monasticism at Sarov, where he was tonsured and given his angelic-inspired name.[5] Serafim was an ascetic monk and hesychast who lived as a hermit in the local forests;[6] he later became known as a pioneer of the renewal in Russia of the Orthodox tradition of contemplative prayer and the institution of spiritual eldership (*starchestvo*).[7] Having lived during the reigns of Catherine II (r. 1762–96), Alexander I (r. 1801–25), and Nicholas I (r. 1825–55), he died in 1833.[8] Posthumously, Serafim came to be considered worthy of veneration, and three early *Lives* (*zhitiia*)

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[1] Evgenii Poselianin, *Prepodobnyi Serafim: Sarovskii chudotvorets i russkie podvizhniki XIX veka* (Moscow: Novoe Nebo, 2018), p. 24.
[2] For more details on Serafim's controversial canonisation, see Gregory L. Freeze, 'Subversive Piety: Religion and the Political Crisis in Late Imperial Russia', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 86, 2 (June 1996), 308–50; Robert L. Nichols, 'Orthodox Spirituality in Imperial Russia: Saint Serafim of Sarov and the awakening of Orthodoxy', *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 16/17 (2000-2001), 19–42; and Richard Price, 'The Canonisation of Serafim of Sarov: Piety, Prophecy and Politics in Late Imperial Russia', *Studies in Christian History*, 47 (2011), 346–64.
[3] Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, 'Poslednii sviatoi' in *Ne mir, no mech'* (Saint Petersburg: Izdanie M. V. Pirozhkov, 1908), 119–92.
[4] Valentin Stepashkin, *Serafim Sarovskii* (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 2019), pp. 6, 23–31; Vladimir Mel'nik, *Prepodobnyi Serafim Sarovskii: Khronika zhizni* (Moscow: GASK, 2012), p. 12.
[5] Stepashkin, *Serafim Sarovskii*, pp. 140–142; Nichols, 'Orthodox Spirituality in Imperial Russia', p. 22.
[6] Nichols, 'Orthodox Spirituality in Imperial Russia', pp. 22–23.
[7] Kallistos Ware, 'Introduction', in Leonid Chichagov, *Chronicles of Seraphim-Diveyevo Monastery*, trans. by Ann Shukman (Cambridge: Saints Alive Press, 2018), pp. xxi–lxxii (p. xxxi); Scott M. Kenworthy, *The Heart of Russia: Trinity-Sergius, Monasticism, and Society After 1825* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 38.
[8] Mel'nik, *Prepodobnyi Serafim Sarovskii*, p. 274.

detailing episodes from his life were produced in the 1840s by the Hieromonks Sergii (1841),[9] Georgii (1844)[10] and Ioasaf (1849),[11] contemporary monks who lived alongside Serafim at Sarov. His fame spread throughout Russia, culminating in his controversial canonisation on the initiative of the imperial family in 1903.

How did the *Lives* of the 1840s construct Serafim's sainthood, and what personal, cultural, political and religious factors shaped the narratives that were eventually accepted for publication? Shunning the modern literary conventions of history or biography, their authors used the genre of hagiography to create an archetype of a saint, and we know Serafim largely through the idealised image crafted in these texts. However, these *Lives* were the products of several hands, including ecclesiastical and secular editors, and were impacted by the pressures of censorship. In the context of developing literacy rates, the *Life* was the perfect platform in which to advance dogma, ideology and claims of a personal-political nature. Considering the circumstances of their publication, what is the relationship between the early *Lives* as exemplars of the conventions of ancient hagiography and the modern context in which they were produced? Finally, in what does the modernity of Serafim's early *Lives* consist?

This dissertation will argue that the first three *Lives* of Serafim, composed and published within 15 years of his death, constructed Serafim as a modern saint, whose image both conformed to the tradition of Orthodox contemplative monasticism and reflected contemporary cultural and political concerns. Serafim's early *Lives* should be seen as an expression of the cultural and political nationalism of Nicholaevan Russia, and as reflective of the dynamic between faith and nation that was a defining feature of nineteenth-century modernity in Russia.

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[9] Hieromonk Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima, Sarovskoi pustyni ieromonakha i zatvornika* (Moscow: V Universitetskoi tipografii, 1841), https://dlib.rsl.ru/viewer/01004831983#?page=1 [last accessed 18 September 2019].
[10] Hieromonk Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima, ieromonakha Sarovskoi pustyni i zatvornika, izvlechennye iz zapisok uchenika ego* (Saint Petersburg: Obshchestvo Pamiati Igumenii Taisii, 2010).
[11] Hieromonk Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima, ieromonakha, pustynnika i zatvornika Sarovskoi pustyni* (Saint Petersburg: V tipografii morskogo Kadetskogo Korpusa, 1849), https://dlib.rsl.ru/viewer/01003571781#?page=3 [last accessed 18 September 2019].

2. Serafim and Existing Scholarship

While there exists a body of work on Serafim's life and his controversial canonisation,[12] there is currently no English-language analysis of the early *Lives*. This dissertation is the first study in English to examine their contents in detail, and the first in any language to situate them within their religious, cultural and political contexts. In doing so, it complements and builds on academic work produced within a range of scholarly fields. Perhaps the most important source for this study is Tatiana Rudi's seminal article on the production history of the early *Lives* and particularly the close relationship between the texts by Sergii and Georgii.[13] This article is commonly cited by scholars working on Serafim.[14] My study extends her work to examine closer the interrelationship of these texts and their wider significance in their culture of production. Complementing Rudi's article is Valentin Stepashkin's recent authoritative biography,[15] which has helped me to differentiate between the factual and the fictive Serafim. There currently exists no full biography of Serafim in English. While Leonid Chichagov's recently translated 1896 work, *Chronicles of Seraphim-Diveyevo Monastery*, provides a detailed account of Serafim's life, it does so in largely hagiographical form and requires caution in using it as a historical source.[16] Its value for this study lies in its treatment of the politics at Diveevo after Serafim's death, which through the use of reports and other documentary evidence sheds useful light on the role of Ioasaf, the author of the third *Life* of Serafim.

While Jeffrey Brooks notes the phenomenon of nineteenth-century *Lives*,[17] the majority of scholarship has focussed on hagiography's ancient and medieval form. Margaret Ziolkowski's work

[12] Freeze, 'Subversive Piety'; Nichols, 'Orthodox Spirituality in Imperial Russia'; Price, 'The Canonisation of Serafim of Sarov'.
[13] Tatiana R. Rudi, 'Rannie zhitiia Serafima Sarovskogo: Voprosy literaturnoi istorii', in *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury* / Rossiiskaia akademiia nauk. *Institut russkoi literatury (Pushkinskii Dom)*, 51 (1999), 427–34.
[14] A notable example is Valentin Stepashkin, in his biography *Serafim Sarovskii*.
[15] Stepashkin, *Serafim Sarovskii*.
[16] Chichagov, *Chronicles of Seraphim-Diveyevo Monastery*.
[17] Jeffrey Brooks, 'Readers and Reading at the End of the Tsarist Era', in *Literature and Society in Imperial Russia*, 1800–1914, ed. by William Mills Todd III (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978), 97–150 (p. 121);

explores the influence of hagiography on modern Russian literature but does not analyse nineteenth-century exemplars of the form.[18] For this study, scholarship on archaic texts has been key to establishing continuities and divergences with modern variants. Given the cultural transmission of ancient saints' *Lives*, work on 'Western' models by Alison Goddard Elliot (on the narrative structure of early hagiography) and Alexandra Hennessey Olsen (on the scholarly treatment and definition of saints' *Lives*) has provoked responses, even within the Russian field.[19] Of particular relevance to my study are Norman Ingham, Gail Lenhoff and Klaus-Dieter Seeman, scholars of medieval Russian texts who debated medieval genre categorisation in a series of articles largely published in *The Slavic and East European Journal*.[20] While these scholars sought to answer whether medieval texts were representative of a generic literary form, my study brings their methodological approaches to bear on modern examples of saints' *Lives*. Similarly, work that examines medieval forms of Russian hagiography by Vasilii Kliuchevksii, Jostein Børtnes, Dmitrii Chizhevskii, Nikolai Gudzy and Dmitrii Likhachev has been used in order to understand the influence of a pre-existing tradition on the *Lives* and the way their modern authors adopt it for their

Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Culture, 1861–1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 24, 31.

[18] Margaret Ziolkowski, *Hagiography and Modern Russian Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

[19] Alison Goddard Elliot, *Roads to Paradise: Reading the Lives of the Early Saints* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1987); Alexandra Hennessey Olsen, 'De Historiis Sanctorum: A Generic Study of Hagiography', *Genre*, 13 (1980), 407–29. For example, Hennessey Olsen's definition of saints' *Lives* is employed as a starting point by Ziolkowskii in her work on the influence of hagiography on Russian literature. See Ziolkowski, *Hagiography and Modern Russian Literature*, pp. 21–22.

[20] Norman W. Ingham, 'Genre-Theory and Old Russian Literature', *The Slavic and East European Journal,* 31, 2 (1987), 234–45; Norman W. Ingham, 'Afterword', *The Slavic and East European Journal,* 31, 2 (1987), 272–74; Gail Lenhoff, 'Towards a Theory of Protogenre in Medieval Russian Letters', *The Russian Review*, 43, 1 (1984), 31–54; Gail Lenhoff, 'Categories of Early Russian Writing', *The Slavic and East European Journal,* 31, 2 (1987), 259–71; Gail Lenhoff, *The Martyred Princes Boris and Gleb: A Socio-cultural Study of the Cult and the Texts* (Columbus: Slavica Publishers, 1989); Klaus-Dieter Seeman and Norman W. Ingham, 'Genres and Alterity of Old Russian Literature', *The Slavic and East European Journal,* 31, 2 (1987), 246–58.

contemporary needs.[21] I additionally build on Rudi's broader scholarship on motifs in ancient and medieval hagiography by charting their use by the modern authors of the *Lives*.[22]

Serafim is encountered in various studies of Russian thought and spirituality, and this dissertation extends such work by providing an analysis of the *Lives* that complements the arguments of these texts. Patrick Michelson's study on the ascetic ideal in nineteenth-century Russian thought and culture and Scott Kenworthy's history of the Trinity-Sergius monastery both detail Serafim as a symbol of ascetic spirituality.[23] My study builds on their research by examining how the early *Lives* established Serafim in the image of an ascetic saint and as a representative of a recovered spirituality. Irina Paert's monograph on the phenomenon of spiritual eldership is a detailed account of the rise of spiritual elders (*startsy*) in modern Russia, which I extend through an analysis of the representation of *starchestvo* in Serafim's early *Lives*.[24] Scholarship by Robert Nichols has been instrumental to understanding Serafim and the context of his spirituality and I advance Nichols' brief references to the early *Lives* into this full study.[25] Studying Serafim as an exemplary figure for cultural nationalists such as the Slavophiles supplements foundational work by Andrei Walicki and Susanna Rabow-Edling.[26] Likewise, in relation to the government policy of Official

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[21]Vasilii Kliuchevskii, *Drevnerusskie zhitiia sviatykh kak istoricheskii istochnik* (Moscow: Nauka 1988); Dmitrii Chizhevskii, *History of Russian Literature from the Eleventh Century to the End of the Baroque* (The Hague: Mouton & Co, 1960); Nikolai Gudzy, *History of Early Russian Literature*, trans. by Susan Wilbur Jones (New York: Octagon Books, 1970); Dmitrii Likhachev, *Poetika drevnerusskoi literatury* (Leningrad: khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1971); Jostein Børtnes, *Visions of Glory*, trans. by Jostein Børtnes and Paul L. Nielsen (Oslo: Solum Forlag A.S., 1988).

[22] Tatiana R. Rudi, 'Iako stolp nepokolebim', in *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury, LV, Institut russkoi literatury (Pushkinskii Dom)* (Saint Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2004), 211–27; Tatiana R. Rudi, 'Topika Russkikh zhitii', in *Russkaia agiografiia. Issledovaniia. Publikatsii. Polemika*, ed. Tatiana Rudi and S. A. Semiachko (Saint Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2005), pp. 59–101; Tatiana R. Rudi, 'O kompozitsii i topike zhitii prepodobnykh', in *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury* / Rossiiskaia akademiia nauk*, Institut russkoi literatury (Pushkinskii Dom)*, 56 (2006), 431–500; Tatiana R. Rudi, 'Pustynnozhiteli Drevnei Rusi (iz istorii agiograficheskoi topiki)', in *Russkaia agiografiia. Issledovaniia. Publikatsii. Polemika*, ed. Tatiana R. Rudi and S. A. Semiachko (Saint Petersburg: Pushkinskii Dom, 2011), pp. 517–30.

[23] Patrick L. Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls: Ascetic Revolution in Russian Orthodox Thought 1814-1914* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2017); Kenworthy, *The Heart of Russia*.

[24] Irina Paert, *Spiritual Elders: Charisma and Tradition in Russian Orthodoxy* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010).

[25] Nichols, 'Orthodox Spirituality in Imperial Russia'; Robert L. Nichols, 'The Orthodox Elders (Startsy) of Imperial Russia', *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook*, 1 (1985), 1–30.

[26] Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, trans. by Hilda Andrews-Rusiecka (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); Susanna Rabow-Edling, *Slavophile Thought and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006).

Nationality, this dissertation responds to work by Nicholas Riasanovsky and Andrei Zorin by presenting the *Lives* as a literary response to the political agenda of Nicholas I's regime.[27]

3. Chapter Overview and Methodological Approaches

This dissertation analyses the three early *Lives* in the immediate and wider cultural contexts of their production. Chapter One analyses the form and content of the early *Lives* to show how their authors employed ascetic narratives and motifs derived from the archaic hagiographical form. It adopts a methodology that synthesises literary-critical (Ingham) and socio-functional (Lenhoff, Seeman) approaches to text production in order to present the early *Lives* as literary constructions that respond to particular religious, cultural and political demands. It examines the personal and ideological motivations that informed the production process of the *Lives* from composition to publication. This chapter demonstrates that the *Lives* were sites of contested authority and exemplars of a broader Russian cultural enterprise to 'reinvent tradition'.[28] Its insights provide a foundation for the analysis of the *Lives* in the context of the modern dynamic between religion and nationalism in the remainder of the dissertation.

Chapter Two analyses the relationship of the early *Lives* to the cultural nationalism of the second quarter of the nineteenth century, and specifically to Russia's recovery of the Orthodox tradition of contemplative spirituality. It examines the role played by the publication of Paisii Velichkovskii's (1722–94) Slavonic language *Philokalia* (*Dobrotoliubie*) and by intellectuals both inside the Church and outside it in this recovery. It argues that Russian modernity should be understood within a framework that foregrounds the interaction of faith and cultural nationalism during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The renewal of ascetic spirituality is examined

[27] Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia, 1825–1855* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959); Andrei Zorin, *By Fables Alone: Literature and State Ideology in Late Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2014).
[28] Eric Hobsbawm, 'Inventing Traditions', in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 1–14.

in the light of work by David Martin and Charles Taylor, who each challenge the standard narrative of religious decline in modern society, and of Jose Casanova's notion of religious de-privatisation, understood as the return of faith to the public square.[29] The symbiotic relationship between faith and cultural nationalism in Russia is shown to represent a modern dynamic that finds expression in Serafim's early *Lives*. These represent Serafim as the quintessential hesychast and elder, the ideal modern exemplar of an ancient, Orthodox and Russian, tradition.

Chapter Three examines how the early *Lives* reflected political nationalism as encapsulated in Nicholas I's ideology of Official Nationality. Albeit a political programme that differed in content and purpose from the cultural project of the Slavophiles, Official Nationality reflected the same modern dynamic between nationalism and religion that found in Serafim a representative figure. Using Uvarov's notorious ideological formula 'Orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality' as a basis for analysis, this chapter argues that Serafim's representation as both a model *starets* and a loyal subject of the tsar enabled these *Lives* to act as conduit for official policy. While this sympathetic literary response to Official Nationality would benefit the state through the indirect dissemination of the latter's policy, by representing Serafim as serving the needs of the state the early *Lives* would at the same time, in keeping with historical precedent, elevate the saintly figure to national prominence. In this way, the *Lives* served to benefit both secular and sacred power.

Saints' *Lives* have often been criticised by scholars for their lack of originality and for what has been called by some scholars their monochrome colour.[30] However, to dismiss these literary artefacts on aesthetic grounds is to neglect their potential to inform our understanding of the cultural and political dynamics of their day. Serafim is now one of Russia's most popular saints, and the Diveevo convent, with which his spiritual practice is most associated, has become a major site of pilgrimage

[29] David Martin, *On Secularisation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007); Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
[30] Hennessey Olsen, 'De Historiis Sanctorum', p. 410; Goddard Elliot, *Roads to Paradise*, p. 2.

in the post-Soviet world.[31] Analysis of the image of Serafim in his early *Lives* discloses the cultural, political, and religious stimuli for his elevation and his particular relevance to Nicholas I's Russia. It lays bare Serafim's construction as a modern proto-saint and reveals the roots of his candidacy for sainthood at the beginning of the twentieth century.

[31] Stella Rock, 'Following in Mary's Footsteps, Marian Apparitions and Pilgrimage in Contemporary Russia', in *Framing Mary: the Mother of God in Modern, Revolutionary, and Post-Soviet Russian Culture*, ed. by Amy Singleton Adams and Vera Shevzov (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2018), pp. 246–69 (p. 246).

‘Апостол Павел говорит: *Поминайте Наставники ваша, иже глаголаша вам Слово Божие, их же взирающе на скончание жительства, подражайте вере их*.’[32]

Chapter One

Sites of Contested Authority

In 1892 an essay in the Russian journal *Strannik* stated that ‘since the adoption of Christianity, the *Lives* of saints have been the favourite books of the Russian’.[33] These were texts of a religious character, first produced in antiquity, which described events in the life of a saint in order to edify readers.[34] During the nineteenth century, it was a literary form that experienced exponential growth, fuelled by improvements in print culture, education and transportation.[35] Such texts were sometimes published in pamphlet form with lithographs of the saintly hero,[36] making them accessible and attractive to this expanding readership. They were popular among the peasantry for their practical benefits, namely to help avoid evil and to focus their minds on God.[37] It was in this context that three early *Lives* of Serafim of Sarov were published in the 1840s, written by three of his monastic contemporaries, the Hieromonks Sergii, Georgii and Ioasaf.[38]

These early *Lives* were modern exemplars of the historic literary form, saints’ *Lives* (*zhitiia*), repurposed by those involved in their publication to respond to specific religious and socio-cultural demands. The potential of the early *Lives* to reach a greatly expanded readership made them ideal vehicles for the promotion of ecclesiastical and personal agendas. Each text was written largely in the vernacular, enhancing its appeal to a newly literate audience. As a result, the early *Lives* became

[32] Hebrews 13. 7, quoted in the opening sentence of the preface to Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima,* p. 3.
[33] A. Iakhontov, ‘Zhitiia sviatykh v ikh znachenii dlia domashnego chteniia’, *Strannik*, 3 (1892), 682–704 (pp. 697–98).
[34] Hippolyte Delahaye, *The Legends of the Saints: An Introduction to Hagiography*, trans. by V. M. Crawford (London: Longmans Green, 1907), p. 2.
[35] Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls*, p. 69.
[36] Brooks, ‘Readers and Reading at the End of the Tsarist Era’, p. 121.
[37] Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, pp. 24, 31.
[38] Rudi, ‘Rannie zhitiia Serafima Sarovskogo’.

sites of contested authority by those involved, directly or indirectly, with their publication.[39] By establishing Serafim as an 'authentic' figure worthy of celebration and suitable for the purpose of edification, those involved in these contests of authority benefitted from employing an archaic genre to support their ideological and personal-political endeavours. What is more, they established a continuity with the historic past to legitimise their interests. Thus, Serafim's early *Lives* are exemplars of a broader Russian cultural enterprise to 'reinvent tradition'. [40]

Examining the early *Lives* from both literary-critical (Ingham) and extra-literary (Lenhoff and Seeman) perspectives serves as a productive approach to examine this thesis. Alexandra Hennessey Olsen defines saints' *Lives* as accounts 'either in verse or prose which describe the lives, or incidents therefrom, deaths, or miracles of saints […] they all have some underlying polemical purpose'.[41] This definition alludes to formal and socio-functional aspects of the genre, prompting a methodological approach to the *Lives* that explores their textual features alongside cultural, social or political catalysts for their publication. With this in mind, section one of this chapter presents the form and content of Serafim's early *Lives*. I adopt Norman Ingham's literary-critical approach to saints' *Lives*, establishing the resemblance of Sergii's, Georgii's and Ioasaf's texts with archaic forms through their use of ascetic narratives and literary motifs.

Section two incorporates methodological insights from Gail Lenhoff and Klaus-Dieter Seeman, who propose a socio-functional approach to medieval texts. As such, it constructs the publication histories of Serafim's early *Lives* by using personal correspondence and other historical sources. This section reveals the roles played in the production of Sergii's and Georgii's *Lives* by Metropolitan Filaret (Drozdov) of Moscow (1782–1867) and Archimandrite Antonii (Medvedev, 1792–1877), both of whom were associated with the rise of ascetic spirituality in nineteenth-century Russia. Ioasaf's *Life*, while also produced collectively, was published without direct ecclesiastical

[39] Stephen K. Batalden, *Russian Bible Wars: Modern Scriptural Translation and Cultural Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 1–4.
[40] Hobsbawm, 'Inventing Traditions'.
[41] Hennessey Olsen, 'De Historiis Sanctorum', p. 425.

support and instead betrays his connections to the imperial family and his personal involvement in the politics surrounding the religious communities of Sarov and Diveevo.

1. Serafim's Early *Lives*: Form and Content

Saints' *Lives* have long been criticised for being amorphous, unstable and lacking consistent formal or stylistic rules.[42] Their nebulous form has proven a challenge to scholars working in the field of Russian medieval *Lives*.[43] Some of these scholars argue that the form's variability undermines text categorisation and analysis;[44] they argue that the medieval reading community is mistakenly imputed by modern researchers with a literary consciousness constructed from contemporary critical study.[45] We know little, if anything, of the medieval mind's treatment of literary categories and aesthetic rules. As such, these scholars, such as Gail Lenhoff, believe that medieval texts should be conceived as solely the products of socio-cultural systems rather than groups of literary-aesthetic creations.[46] Yet, Serafim's early *Lives* were clearly not produced *ex nihilo*; when we examine them, we see that they adopt textual features identifiable in archaic saints' *Lives*, rendered anew for a modern audience. Each of the early *Lives* casts Serafim, through narratives and motifs, as a recognisably ascetic figure: a holy monk who imitates Christ (*prepodobnyi*) by retreating from the world to undertake ascetic deeds.[47] To what extent, then, can we establish a relationship between these modern exemplars and the historic literary form?

[42] Hennessey Olsen, 'De Historiis Sanctorum', p. 424; Lenhoff, 'Towards a Theory of Protogenre', p. 50.
[43] For example, identifying a common structure to the hagiographic form has typically resulted in disagreement. Some Russian scholarship has described the saints' *Life* as adhering to a tri-partite structure: an encomiastic introduction, a central descriptive section, a conclusion with a eulogy and miracles (Lenhoff, 'Towards a Theory of Protogenre', p. 36). Other scholars challenge this assumption: Chizhevskii, for example, divides Nestor's (c. 1056–c. 1114) influential *Life* of Feodosii Pecherskii into two parts and further subdivides part one into fourteen episodes, see Chizhevskii, *History of Russian Literature*, pp. 43–45.
[44] Lenhoff, 'Towards a Theory of Protogenre' p. 38.
[45] Lenhoff, 'Towards a Theory of Protogenre', pp. 49–50; Lenhoff, 'Categories of Early Russian Writing', p. 260.
[46] Lenhoff, 'Categories of Early Russian Writing', pp. 263–64.
[47] V. M. Zhivov, *Sviatost': Kratkii slovar' agiograficheskikh terminov* (Moscow: Gnosis, 1994), p. 81.

To account for the seeming variability of texts, Norman Ingham argues that medieval genres can be constructed through the study of their 'family resemblance'.[48] By this, Ingham means that recognisable sets of texts (analogous to a human family) share common features that can be identified on analysis. As with a biological family, a set of texts will contain varying stylistic or formal departures from the group. For Ingham, imposing strict necessary and sufficient conditions for categories of saints' *Lives* excludes texts to the point where no meaningful category can be constructed.[49] Instead, bundles of common traits, such as structure, style, titles of texts and/or their inclusion in codices, are viewed as potential indicators of generic groups.[50] These shared characteristics in various combinations create recognisable generic resemblances, even where texts display formal or stylistic departures.[51] What binds these texts together is a community consensus that they belong to the same family.[52] To paraphrase Ingham, we recognise the genre's reality for the authors of Serafim's early *Lives* on the basis that we feel compelled to discuss the relationship of the texts to older models of saints' *Lives*.[53] The early *Lives* adopt traditional ascetic narratives and motifs, recognisable to a modern reader versed in the genre. The association with the historic form imbues the early *Lives* with an aura of authenticity, which could establish Serafim as a familiar ascetic figure for co-option by those supportive of their publication. In turn, they create in Serafim a legitimate figure for veneration and edification, attractive to their intended audience.

1.1 Ascetic Narratives in Serafim's Early *Lives*

As Kliuchevskii states, 'the *Life* is not a biography, but an edificatory panegyric within the framework of biography; just as the image of a saint in a *Life* is not a portrait, but an icon'.[54] Similarly, the first *Life* of Serafim, published in 1841 and authored by Hieromonk Sergii (Stepan Vasil'evich Vasil'ev,

[48] Ingham, 'Genre-Theory and Old Russian Literature', p. 236.
[49] Ibid., p. 236.
[50] Ibid., p. 237.
[51] Ibid., p. 239.
[52] Ibid., p. 236.
[53] Ibid., p. 241.
[54] Vasilii Osipovich Kliuchevksii, *O Russkoi istorii* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1993), p. 220.

1792–1861),[55] does not observe the conventions of critical interpretive biography.[56] Nor does it adopt the modes of the nineteenth-century Russian novel, focussed on psychological insight and individual uniqueness.[57] A concise volume of just 32 pages, Sergii's work presents key events from Serafim's life in a largely vernacular language that alternates between the simple and archaic, weaving biblical quotations and references to the Church Fathers throughout the text. It provides little by way of historical, cultural or social context, and Serafim is presented in an abstracted manner, eschewing attempts at psychological speculation. There are large gaps where years pass by with no events of significance and key dates are often incorrect.[58] In this way, it adopts the mode common to the archaic form, shared also by the later *Lives* of Georgii and Ioasaf.

Sergii's short *Life* establishes the narrative framework for the later *Lives*. Mirroring the medieval tradition of hagiography, the *Life* opens with a foreword that explains why the author is undertaking this work;[59] quoting Hebrews 13. 7, Sergii proposes Serafim's life as a virtuous model for readers to imitate, suggesting the intended role of the saints' *Life* to edify a reading community.[60] The narrative then proceeds as follows: Serafim is born Prokhor Moshnin on 19 July 1759 in the town of Kursk;[61] around the age of seven he falls from a church building site and is found inexplicably unharmed on the ground below;[62] he is miraculously cured of an illness around the age of ten when he venerates the *Wonderworking Icon of the Mother of God* (*Chudotvornaia Ikona Bozhiei Materi*), brought to his yard when an icon procession is fortuitously diverted by inclement

[55] Rudi, 'Rannie zhitiia Serafima Sarovskogo', pp. 427–28; Stepashkin, *Serafim Sarovskii*, p. 245.
[56] Hans Renders, 'Roots of Biography: From Journalism to Pulp to Scholarly Based Non-Fiction', in *Theoretical Discussions of Biography*, ed. by Hans Renders and Binne de Haan (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 24–42 (pp. 26–29).
[57] Nina Perlina, 'Toward a Concept of an Ideal Hero in Dostoevskij's "Brat'ja Karamazovy"', *Russian Language Journal*, vol. 37, 128 (1983), 63–73 (pp. 63–65).
[58] Many of the dates in Sergii's *Life* are incorrect, a likely result of Sergii composing his *Life* after he had left Sarov, away from the monastery archives, see Stepashkin, *Serafim Sarovskii*, pp. 246–48. Many of these incorrect dates found their way into the second *Life*, by Georgii, see Stepashkin, *Serafim Sarovskii*, p. 248.
[59] Rudi, 'Rannie zhitiia Serafima Sarovskogo', p. 428.
[60] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, p. 3.
[61] Ibid., p. 5. See Stepashkin, *Serafim Sarovskii*, pp. 23–31, for a discussion and explanation of the discrepancy between the dates of birth (actually 1754) provided in various accounts of Serafim's life. See also Vladimir Mel'nik's work *Prepodobnyi Serafim Sarovskii* for a chronological account of Serafim's life based on documentary evidence, which provides accurate dates for historical events related to Serafim.
[62] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, pp. 5–6.

weather;[63] he enters the monastery of Sarov on 20 November 1778, having first travelled to Kiev to worship holy relics;[64] he is tasked with various monastic duties and in 1780 is cured of illness by vigils, liturgy and holy communion;[65] he is tonsured on 13 August 1786 and in December 1787 becomes a Hierodeacon;[66] he maintains a forest hermitage and in 1794 he receives the blessing of the monastery superior to retreat there in solitude;[67] he stands for a thousand days in prayer on stones in the forest;[68] on 12 September 1804, he is beaten close to death by three local peasants searching for money in his forest hermitage;[69] he returns to the monastery on 9 May 1809 to live in total seclusion in his cell;[70] after five years of silence, he begins to receive visitors to his monastic cell seeking spiritual counsel;[71] on 25 November 1825, he leaves his monastic cell to spend daylight hours at a new forest hermitage and continues his practice as a spiritual elder (*starets*);[72] he is found dead on 2 January 1833, kneeling before his icons as if still in prayer.[73]

Like other models of the form, Sergii's *Life* reflects aspects of the life of Christ, and in doing so, observes a predetermined narrative pattern.[74] In the earliest example of ascetic hagiography, Athanasius's (c. 296–373) *Life* of St. Antony of Egypt (c. 251–356),[75] Antony is described as withdrawing to the wilderness for twenty years to practice 'his ascetic discipline', returning to the world 'as though from some shrine, having been initiated into divine mysteries and inspired by God'.[76] It is a narrative of flight and return, imitative of Christ's time in the desert, reflected across Sergii's, and other *Lives* of Serafim.[77] Sergii's narrative constitutes a typical gradational scheme

[63] Ibid., pp. 6–7.
[64] Ibid., p. 7.
[65] Ibid., pp. 8–9.
[66] Ibid., pp. 9–10.
[67] Ibid., p. 11.
[68] Ibid., pp. 13–14.
[69] Ibid., pp. 16–18.
[70] Ibid., p. 19.
[71] Ibid., p. 22.
[72] Ibid., pp. 23–25.
[73] Ibid., pp. 30–31.
[74] Hennessey Olsen, 'De Historiis Sanctorum', p. 411.
[75] Goddard Elliot, *Roads to Paradise*, pp. 44–45.
[76] *The Life of Antony*, trans. by Tim Vivian and Apostolos N. Anathassakis (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 2003), p. 91.
[77] Ware, 'Introduction', p. xxvi.

found in similar *Lives*. Rather than the single act of martyrdom found in the *passiones*,[78] Sergii's *Life* adopts a structure typical of ascetic *vitae* (*Lives*), casting Serafim on a journey toward spiritual perfection and an ever-closer union with God. Serafim retreats to his metaphorical desert (*pustyn'*), the Sarov forest, imitating the early Christian journeys to the *interior mons*.[79] It is a withdrawal 'from the world in search of greater sanctity', an ascent toward spiritual perfection.[80] As the saintly figure performs greater ascetic deeds, so events described in the *Life* become more sacred and miraculous.[81] It is reflective of the solitude, and associated ascetic terrors and temptations, that led Sergii Radonezhskii (1314–92) to found the famous Trinity-Sergius monastery.[82] In each case, withdrawal and ascetic endeavours are the pre-requisite to the enhancement and perfection of the saint's spiritual powers. The course of Serafim's life is punctuated by moments of divine intervention that mark Serafim as chosen, and across the narrative arc Serafim's solitude and ascetic deeds develop in a crescendo to the ultimate revelation of his authority as a model *starets*.

This narrative scheme is adopted and embellished in the *Life* authored by Hieromonk Georgii (Gurii Ivanovich Vyrapaev, 1797–1866). Although published three years later in 1844, Sergii's and Georgii's *Lives* are textually close and in certain places completely identical.[83] However, Georgii's *Life* contains mystical and miraculous elaborations not contained in the earlier volume.[84] Taken together, these additions develop a sense of Serafim's chosenness; his sanctification as he perfects his spirituality. For example, both texts recall the childhood illness suffered by Serafim and his healing soon after the icon procession in Kursk. Sergii's text describes this as a miraculous and complete healing, after the youth venerates the icon ('Po sem Chudotvornaia Ikona perenesena byla chrez nego, i v tozhe vremia otrok poluchil chudesnoe i sovershennoe istselenie, […]').[85] Georgii expands

[78] *Passiones* were some of the earliest examples of hagiography, focussed on the lives of saints who had died in acts of martyrdom. See Goddard Elliot, *Roads to Paradise*, pp. 16–18.
[79] Goddard Elliot, *Roads to Paradise*, p. 42.
[80] Ibid., p. 45.
[81] Ibid., p. 62.
[82] G. P. Fedotov, *A Treasury of Russian Spirituality* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1952), p. 51.
[83] Rudi, 'Rannie zhitiia Serafima Sarovskogo', pp. 428, 430.
[84] Ibid., pp. 430–31.
[85] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, p. 7.

this incident by describing a visitation by the Mother of God to Serafim in a dream, in which she promises to visit and heal Serafim ('V sonnom videnii iavilas' emu Bogomater', obeshchala posetit' ego i istselit' ot bolezni').[86] This promise comes to pass in the form of the Marian icon on its procession. The scene establishes a relationship with the Mother of God that is pivotal to Georgii's and later *Lives*.[87]

Elsewhere in Georgii's text, Serafim is depicted as experiencing visions of holy angels during church liturgies. He is reported to say that he was left unaware of where he was and whether he was inside or outside his body ('Ne mogu skazat' tebe, chto ia byl, v tele, ili krome tela […]').[88] During one liturgy, while presiding as Hierodeacon, Serafim is described as being illuminated and witnessing a vision of Christ surrounded by a host of angels, which lights the church with an indescribable light ('[…] uvidel ia Gospoda i Boga nashego, Iisusa Khrista, […] vo slave i neizrechennym svetom siiaiushchego, okruzhennago nebesnymi silami, Angelami […]').[89] By comparison, Sergii's *Life* does not provide explicit details of such experiences, stating only that 'with a mind cleared of passions, [Serafim] repeatedly had spiritual visions' ('Imeia um, ochishchennyi ot strastei, on neodnokratno udostaivalsia dukhovnykh videnii').[90] Such miraculous visions are found in historic precedents, including the *Life* of Sergii Radonezhskii, who is depicted as bathed in the light of the Virgin Mary and the apostles Peter and John.[91] By reflecting similar episodes of spiritual visitation, Georgii emphasises Serafim's developing sanctity. He validates Serafim as a figure worthy of sainthood by

[86] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* pp. 5–6.
[87] Serafim is expressed in Georgii's text to receive visitations from Mary, the Mother of God, at several key junctures, such during his illness in 1780 at the monastery, after which he is healed (Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* pp. 11–12); or just prior to opening his cell door in 1815 (Ibid., p. 43). Most significantly, he is visited by Mary and the Apostles Peter and John, where she points to him and says to Serafim, 'he is one of Mine' ('[…] sei ot roda Moego!') (Ibid., p. 38). This association with Mary is crucial in the context of Diveevo's chosen location as Mary's fourth domain on earth and establishing Serafim's association with the convent, see Rock, 'Following in Mary's Footsteps', p. 255.
[88] Ibid., p. 14.
[89] Ibid., pp. 15–16.
[90] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, p. 10.
[91] 'Zhitie Sergiia Radonezhskogo' in *Biblioteka literatury Drevnei Rusi*, *Volume 6*, ed. by D. S. Likhachev, L. A. Dmitriev, A. A. Alekseev, N. V. Ponyrko (Saint Petersburg: Nauka, 1999), http://lib.pushkinskijdom.ru/Default.aspx?tabid=4989 [last accessed 16 September 2019] (para. 189).

drawing a comparison to a traditional image deployed in a medieval model of the hagiographical form.[92]

Georgii's text also introduces new tales not contained in the narrative of Sergii's *Life*, such as Serafim's meeting with the hermit Dosifei at the Kitaevskoi monastery, who directs Serafim to join Sarov;[93] the naming of locations around his forest hermitage after places of significant events in the New Testament;[94] his meeting with four Old Believers, proselytising to them on the true faith;[95] and his feeding of wild animals, including bears.[96] Many of these additions found their way into later texts, becoming part of the narrative canon of Serafim's *Lives*. As with the miraculous embellishments, these newly described events are designed to emphasise Serafim's authority, to establish him as chosen and worthy of veneration.

A third early *Life* of Serafim was published in 1849, authored by Hieromonk Ioasaf (Ivan Tikhonovich Tolstosheev, 1802–84).[97] While Ioasaf's *Life* stands textually and stylistically alone, it acknowledges the narrative of ascetic withdrawal and return, developed across the first two *Lives*.[98] The foreword includes a list of narrative events recounted in Georgii's *Life* and states that these are not included in Ioasaf's text to avoid repetition ('[…] chtoby ne povtoriat' uzhe izvestnogo […]').[99] Ioasaf's *Life* departs from the two earlier models in its structure and the inclusion of new tales, notably those connected to Serafim's role as *starets*, and his relationship with the Diveevo convent. Whereas Sergii's and Georgii's *Lives* are simple, roughly chronological accounts of Serafim's life, Ioasaf's *Life* is split into four sections: a foreword; a chronological *Life* of Serafim in Part One; various

[92] Serafim's visit by Mary and the Apostles Peter and John is a reflection of the event described in the *Life* of Sergii Radonezhskii. See Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 38.
[93] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* pp. 7–8.
[94] Ibid., pp. 20–21.
[95] Ibid., pp. 48–49.
[96] Ibid., pp. 25–26.
[97] Rudi, 'Rannie zhitiia Serafima Sarovskogo', p. 429. Note, I do not include Hieromonk Avel's 1848 short-form account of Serafim's life contained in *Kratkaia dukhovnaia lestvitsa, vozvodiashchaia khristianina k liubvi Bozhiei* alongside accounts of other Sarov elders. Avel published a further account of Serafim's life in the 1860 second edition of *Obshchezhitel'naia Sarovskaia pustyn' i dostopamiatnye inoki, v nei podvizavshiesia*. See Stepashkin, *Serafim Sarovskii*, pp. 253–56.
[98] Rudi, 'Rannie zhitiia Serafima Sarovskogo', p. 430.
[99] Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*', p. vi.

tales about Serafim, as witnessed by Ioasaf, in Part Two; and tales from other witnesses in Part Three. While this structure appears as a modern innovation when compared to historical precedents, the narrative developed throughout this text is nevertheless consistent with the overarching formula for saints' *Lives*. As with Sergii's and Georgii's accounts, Ioasaf introduces biblical quotations and imagery throughout the text and presents Serafim in a similarly abstracted manner. It relays in more detail, or from the perspective of witnesses, events described in the earlier *Lives*. It retains the mystical aspects of Georgii's text and extends these elements with new tales of Serafim's miracles such as Serafim's removal of a heavy stump of wood from the local river, which he is described to have managed with the help of an angel.[100] There are also numerous tales that highlight Serafim's gifts of intuition and foresight. In one episode, Serafim is shown to accurately locate for a peasant his stolen horse.[101] In a witness account of a monk from the Zadonsk monastery, Ioasaf reports that Serafim sent a letter out of the blue to the monk, with whom he was not acquainted; Serafim is said to have intuited the thoughts of the monk, who was planning to leave the monastery, and instructed him in the letter to remain at the monastery.[102] Each of these tales present Serafim as a source of insight and wisdom, a conduit of divine power. They largely occur in his old age after his years of solitude and thereby give especial prominence to his ascetic deeds as the source of his spiritual powers.

The foreword to Ioasaf's *Life* was written not by Ioasaf, but by a St. Petersburg schoolteacher called N. E. Andreevskii, about whom little is known.[103] The purpose of the text is stated as the dissemination of Serafim's teachings to those wanting to learn more about the great *starets*.[104] The foreword details another reason for publication: the role 'entrusted to [Serafim] by the elders, related to the construction of the Diveevo convent, from the spiritual perspective and the

[100] Ibid., pp. 54–55.
[101] Ibid., pp. 137–39.
[102] Ibid., pp. 127–28.
[103] Nadezhda Bekasova, 'Rannie zhitiinye povestvovaniia o prepodobnom Serafime Sarovskom: istochnikovedcheskii aspekt', *Bogoslovskii Sbornik*, *Novosibirskaia Pravoslavnaia Dukhovnaia Seminariia*, 9 (2014), 142–72 (p. 164).
[104] Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*', p. i.

physical'.[105] Ioasaf's *Life* is an interesting source of information, albeit biased, about the expansion and developments at Diveevo ('[…] Skazaniia o zhizni posluzhat odnim iz vazhneishikh istochnikov sushchestvovaniia i blagoustroistva ikh obiteli').[106] In this way, Ioasaf's text extends beyond a recognisably ascetic narrative developed in Sergii's and Georgii's *Lives* and includes tales that point to the contemporary, political concerns of the acquisition of monastic land and the construction of key buildings for the convent.[107]

1.2 Ascetic Motifs in Serafim's Early *Lives*

Ioasaf's concern with the politics of Sarov-Diveevo points to his purpose in accommodating tales of his and Serafim's roles at the convent alongside a narrative structure so recognisably ascetic. Likewise, his use also of traditional ascetic motifs, as seen in Georgii's and Sergii's *Lives*, suggest a deliberate resemblance to older, prominent models of the genre for contemporary objectives beyond just the celebration of Serafim alone. In older models, the hagiographer's choice of interchangeable motifs, also referred to as commonplaces or *topoi*, was crucial to establishing the saint's authority to edify.[108] Rather than redundant artefacts, these were key to the hagiographer's portrayal of an abstracted idea.[109] Like medieval texts, the authors of Serafim's early *Lives* used abstraction to distil unchangeable, immaterial, eternal truths from the particular, material and temporal.[110] By borrowing motifs from precedent texts, the authors could point to universal Christian norms and ideals, identifiable to a reading community.[111]

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[105] Ibid., pp. iii–iv.
[106] Ibid., pp. iv–v.
[107] See Chapters 14 and 15 in Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, pp. 60–67, which handle the acquisition of monastic lands from local landowners and details the construction of the mill community at Diveevo.
[108] Ziolkowski, *Hagiography and Modern Russian Literature*, pp. 29–30. This phenomenon of using borrowed phrases, or commonplaces was referred to by Dmitrii Likhachev as 'literary etiquette', see Likhachev, *Poetika drevnerusskoi literatury*, pp. 95–122.
[109] Goddard Elliot, *Roads to Paradise*, p. 11.
[110] Likhachev, *Poetika drevnerusskoi literatury*, p. 123.
[111] Kliuchevskii, *Drevnerusskie zhitiia sviatykh kak istoricheskii istochnik*, p. 436.

Many motifs, replicated across ancient and medieval models of saints' *Lives*, are imitative of Christ's acts, behaviour or character, conferring legitimacy and sanctity on the hero of a *Life*.[112] While they are the source of hagiography's 'monochrome colour', not least in their repetition, such motifs were employed as less aesthetic decoration than signals to the reader that reassured them of their religious understanding: through them a modern reader of the *Life* could recognise Serafim as a saint, or at the very least, a proto-saint in the decades before his official canonisation.[113] The authors of Serafim's early *Lives* employed motifs of demonic battles, saintly endurance and mortification, among others, drawn from precedent texts. By adopting parallels to other ascetic models, Serafim was sanctified through a continuity with the archaic form and assumed the mode of an authentic, ascetic 'saint'.

The motif of battle with evil spirits, as expressed in the *Life* of Antony, and later reflected in the *Lives* of Feodosii Pecherskii (c. 1008–74) and Sergii Radonezhskii, is common to the ascetic *Life*.[114] It is a motif imitative of the forty days spent in the wilderness by Christ. The devil, in the *Life* of Antony, is cast as an enemy of asceticism, who fears the saint's ascetic feats.[115] Antony is beaten by demonic forces 'with so many blows that he was left on the ground'.[116] In the *Life* of Feodosii Pecherskii, multitudes of demons are described as descending on Feodosii in his cave hermitage, creating a loud din in an attempt to distract the saint from his prayer and seclusion, even wounding him.[117] Demonic forces also set upon Sergii Radonezhskii during his period of solitude, 'with gnashing teeth, wishing to kill him, telling him: "Run, disappear from here, live here no more"'.[118] In each case,

[112] Børtnes, *Visions of Glory*, p. 39.
[113] Goddard Elliot, *Roads to Paradise*, p. 75.
[114] Rudi, 'Pustynnozhiteli Drevnei Rusi', p. 528.
[115] *The Life of Antony*, p. 79.
[116] Ibid., p. 79.
[117] 'Zhitie Feodosiia Pecherskogo' in *Biblioteka literatury Drevnei Rusi*, *Volume 1*, ed. by D. S. Likhachev, L. A. Dmitriev, A. A. Alekseev, N. V. Ponyrko (Saint Petersburg: Nauka, 1997), http://lib.pushkinskijdom.ru/Default.aspx?tabid=4872 [last accessed 14 September 2019] (paras. 34, 35). Nestor, the author of this *Life*, even draws an explicit comparison with St. Antony: 'I mnogo raz zlye dukhi dosazhdali emu, iavliaias' v videniiakh v toi peshchere, a poroi i rany emu nanosili, kak pishut i o sviatom i velikom Antonii', see para. 34. This is a clear example of the referential nature of motifs.
[118] 'Zhitie Sergiia Radonezhskogo', para. 73.

the ascetic figure is targeted by spiritual warfare, a battle that tests and drives him to greater spiritual perfection. Sergii and Georgii reflect this motif in their *Lives* by describing how at night during his prayers, Serafim is attacked by the devil and thrown in the air so hard that 'without God's help his bones might have been smashed from such strikes'.[119] In Ioasaf's *Life*, the motif of demonic attack occurs during Serafim's intercession for a 'lost soul', gripped by the claws of Satan in an explicit depiction of satanic warfare. Serafim is struck by a winged beast, whose claws leaves a deep scar between his shoulder blades, 'the size of a goose egg'.[120] The physical violence in all three early *Lives* is alarming but conforms to the threatening imagery contained in the archaic motif of demonic struggle.

Serafim is also depicted as a 'pillar of endurance' (*stolp terpeniia*), a model of patience and fortitude in what is another significant motif borrowed from earlier texts.[121] It is an image derived from the image of suffering in the book of Job,[122] of Christ in the New Testament gospels, and finds its hagiographical expression prominently in the *Life* of Simeon Stylites (c. 390–459).[123] Serafim's one thousand day standing prayer vigil, described in all three early *Lives*, is a classic representation of the motif of *stolp terpeniia*.[124] Sergii's and Georgii's *Lives* even draw an explicit parallel, stating that Serafim's act is performed 'in imitation of Saint Simeon Stylites' ('v podrazhanie Prepodobnomu Simeonu Stolpniku').[125] Serafim survives on only what the Sarov brothers bring him to eat and a local forest herb called *snitka*.[126] It recalls the ascetic acts of Sergii Radonezhskii, who would stand in prayer without rest, suffering hunger and thirst.[127] In Ioasaf's account, the physical toll of the ascetic

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[119] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, p. 15; Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 35.
[120] Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, pp. 68–70.
[121] Rudi, 'Iako stolp nepokolebim', p. 224.
[122] See Job 2. 7–9, 7. 5, among other examples.
[123] *The Lives of Simeon Stylites*, trans. by Robert Doran (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1992).
[124] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, pp. 13–14; Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* pp. 32–34; Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, pp. 70– 73.
[125] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, p. 13; Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 32.
[126] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, p. 13; Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 32.
[127] 'Zhitie Sergiia Radonezhskogo', para. 72.

feat that Serafim endures is described: 'he suffered a strong pain in his legs, which became completely swollen, worn-out and constantly leaked fluid'.[128] This image of Serafim withering his flesh represents what Georgii Fedotov describes as 'a continual dying of the body to release the life of the spirit'.[129]

Rudi identifies this image as a motif of *tomlenie tela*, vexation of the body, typically represented in the image of the saint bloodied by insect bites.[130] In the *Life* of Feodosii Pecherskii, Feodosii is described as enveloped by 'gadflies and mosquitoes […] eating him and drinking his blood'.[131] Feodosii is shown to willingly accept this suffering. Likewise, Georgii presents Serafim as a similar figure of fortitude. Georgii describes how on hot summer days, Serafim would gird his loins to enter the forest swamps and collect moss. As he carried out the task, flies and mosquitos spread around him 'like a cloud'.[132] The blood would drip from the insect bites and bake on his skin in the sun. Georgii writes that Serafim's 'face and body swelled and went blue from the poisonous stings'.[133] In Ioasaf's text, Serafim is similarly described as 'all covered in blood from the wounds of flies, mosquitoes and other insects, from which [he] never defended himself'.[134] By introducing the image of a bitten and bloodied Serafim, the authors not only relate him to older ascetic models, but establish a parallel with the image of a humiliated Christ, a fundamental source of imagery for ascetic hagiography.

A reader of Serafim's early *Lives*, versed in the genre, would have recognised the common motifs employed in the texts. Through adopting such motifs of demonic battle, endurance and self-mortification, the authors proffered Serafim as an ascetic saintly figure. They relate Serafim's acts to

[128] Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, p. 97.
[129] G. P. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind, Volume One: Kievan Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 152.
[130] Rudi, 'O kompozitsii i topike zhitii prepodobnykh', pp. 477, 498.
[131] 'Zhitie Feodosiia Percherskogo', para 29.
[132] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 27.
[133] Ibid., p. 27.
[134] Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, p. 57.

prominent models of saints' *Lives* and thereby create an equivalency that sanctifies his life and deeds. When combined with the overarching ascetic narrative arcs of the texts, the texts reveal their generic resemblance to the archaic literary form. It is this resemblance that would be key to elevating Serafim as a figure of veneration. In the context of the awakening of ascetic spirituality in nineteenth-century Russia, it is the conscious adoption of this literary form that presented Serafim as representative of the era.[135]

2. Producing the early *Lives*

The authors of Serafim's early *Lives* were influenced not only by existing literary models but also by the specific historical context and particularly the political and censorial circumstances in which they wrote. Specifically, the involvement of Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow and Archimandrite Antonii of the Trinity-Sergius monastery, both of whom were champions of ascetic spirituality, is clearly visible in the publication of Sergii's and Georgii's *Lives*. Conversely, their absence in respect of Ioasaf's *Life* is notable: Ioasaf's (commonly criticised) role in the management of the Diveevo convent becomes a central force behind his publication. By adopting insights from Gail Lenhoff's and Klaus-Dieter Seeman's extra-literary approach to medieval *Lives*, we see the authors' impulse to adopt the archaic form in the early *Lives* of Serafim in the context of their production history.[136] Ingham himself recognises there are both generic and historical dimensions to literature and encourages a synthesis of these two approaches.[137] Applied to Serafim's *Lives*, this synthesis can help explain how certain religious, cultural or personal-political demands came to be accommodated in this archaic written form, with the effect of repurposing saints' *Lives* for the modern age.

For Lenhoff, medieval saints' *Lives* are the products of extra-literary cultural systems, revealed by analysing a text's life-situation (*Sitz im Leben*), a concept adopted and developed

[135] Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls*, pp. 33–35.
[136] Lenhoff, 'Categories of Early Russian Writing', p. 264.
[137] Ingham, 'Genre-Theory and Old Russian Literature', p. 242.

separately by scholars such as Seeman.[138] Seeman argued, that rather than verbal conventions, 'genres are conceptualized sociologically and are traced to a "typical situation or behavioural mode in the life of society"'.[139] For this socio-functional school, literature is not just primarily an aesthetic endeavour, but also has a practical, functional purpose, related closely to its *Sitz im Leben*. Studying the functional categories of a given cultural system illuminates a text's place and significance for a reading community. Rather than modern generic categories, Lenhoff suggests proto-generic categories are imposed on sets of similar texts that respond to the 'demands of one or more cultural system or subsystem'.[140] The author's selection and combination of linguistic material is the final product of the requirements, or forces, of socio-cultural institutions.[141]

When Lenhoff's and Seeman's approach is adapted for modern texts like the early *Lives*, it sheds light on their functional purpose, developed as a response to specific religious, social, cultural and/or political demands. When synthesised with Ingham's literary-critical theory, it produces a methodological approach that enables a more comprehensive analysis: a socio-functional approach that details the context and purpose of the text in dialogue with a literary-critical approach that illuminates the text's place within a literary canon, indicating its significance, purpose and meaning.[142] The *Sitz im Leben* of a medieval text typically needs to be 'read' out of the text itself, creating an inherent circularity in the process.[143] Unlike medieval models, the *Sitz im Leben* producing Serafim's early *Lives* can be constructed from independent, historical documentary evidence, not least personal correspondence related to their publication history. This makes it a profitable approach in the modern context: by studying the interaction of the immediate demands for production of these texts with the literary form adopted, the scholar can better understand the

[138] Lenhoff, 'Towards a Theory of Protogenre' p. 51; Lenhoff, 'Categories of Early Russian Writing', pp. 259, 263–64; Seeman, 'Genres and Alterity of Old Russian Literature', pp. 249–52.
[139] Seeman, 'Genres and Alterity of Old Russian Literature', p. 250. Note, in respect of medieval letters, Seeman does not use the term genre in its modern sense, instead genre in the medieval context is a matter of convention 'within the specific field of interaction' (p. 248).
[140] Lenhoff, *The Martyred Princes Boris and Gleb*, p. 25.
[141] Lenhoff, 'Categories of Early Russian Writing', p. 267.
[142] Ingham, 'Afterword', p. 274.
[143] Ingham, 'Genre-Theory and Old Russian Literature', p. 242.

significance of these texts as artefacts used in contests of authority (be it ideological, political or otherwise). I shall now present the publication history of the early *Lives*, which points to the motivations for the authors' choice in adopting the archaic form of saints' *Lives*.

2.1 The Publication of Sergii's and Georgii's *Lives*

In a letter of 22 July 1838, Metropolitan Filaret wrote to the prior (*namestnik*) of the Trinity-Sergius monastery, Archimandrite Antonii: 'Here's what would be good. If there were capable and willing writers in the monastery who would write *Lives* for themselves and for those who desire them. It would be a blessing to the authors and a benefit to the readers'.[144] In the authors of the first two *Lives* of Serafim, Filaret found willing scribes who could respond to his interest in mysticism, contemplative prayer and the traditions of the early Church Fathers.[145] They could also produce texts that might assuage the popular demand for the veneration of local 'saints', a source of tension for an official church balancing the needs of lay believers and its own reticence to endorse superstition.[146]

Through various influential positions, Filaret had long promoted ascetic discourse and spiritual eldership (*starchestvo*), and he was particularly devoted to promoting the ascetic form of monasticism practiced at the Trinity-Sergius monastery.[147] His spirituality was characterised by a 'return to the sources', which led him to a 'rediscovery' of a traditional Orthodox spirituality considered lost during the eighteenth century.[148] As a key figure in the battles over scriptural

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[144] Stepashkin, *Serafim Sarovskii*, p. 251. Note, the convention in the period was for the Metropolitan of Moscow to oversee Trinity-Sergius, hence Filaret's close association with the monastery, see Kenworthy, *The Heart of Russia*, p. 28.
[145] Kenworthy, *The Heart of Russia*, p. 37.
[146] Gregory L. Freeze, 'Institutionalizing Piety: The Church and Popular Religion, 1750–1850', in *Imperial Russia: New Histories for the Empire*, ed. by Jane Burbank and David L. Ransel (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1998), 210–49 (pp. 219–20, 231–35).
[147] Filaret was associated with the educational reform movement in Russian Orthodoxy that took shape in the early nineteenth century, see Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls*, pp. 67–68. Filaret also founded Gethsemane Skete, which was designed to facilitate an atmosphere like the famous Optina Pustyn', a place for withdrawal, the development of insight and the sustenance of ancient spiritual traditions including *starchestvo*, see Nichols, 'The Orthodox Elders (Startsy) of Imperial Russia', pp. 16–17; Kenworthy, *The Heart of Russia*, pp. 73–110.
[148] Kenworthy, *The Heart of Russia*, p. 37.

authority within the Russian Orthodox Church, he was keenly aware of the politics of publication and the threat of reprisals from the secular authorities for promoting dissident thought that would threaten religious unity.[149] Specifically, the reign of Nicholas I placed extra political constraint on the Orthodox church,[150] not least through the nationalist demands of his policy of Official Nationality.[151] Being a member of the Church hierarchy and aware of the machinations of power, Filaret was particularly well placed to guide hagiographical works on Serafim's life to publication.

In Antonii, Filaret had a prior who held a similar devotion to contemplative spirituality and was likewise well read in the ascetic literature of the Church Fathers.[152] It was Antonii who was key to bringing Serafim to Filaret's attention. Antonii had lived at Sarov from 1818 to 1821 and later regularly visited the monastery to consult with the spiritual elders, including Serafim himself.[153] Serafim left a profound mark on Antonii and was said to have foretold Antonii's appointment as prior of Trinity-Sergius, indicative of Serafim's gift of foresight.[154] He even asked Antonii to take care of the Diveevo sisters, foreshadowing the political intrigues developed in later *Lives*.[155] Serafim's impact led Antonii to take steps to raise Serafim as a figure of celebration in the Orthodox Church, and he took frequent opportunities to share his experience of Serafim and stories related to the Sarov *startsy*.[156] In this way, the *Lives* by Sergii and Georgii were the perfect vehicles for Filaret and

[149] Batalden, *Russian Bible Wars*, p. 90.
[150] David W. Edwards, 'The System of Nicholas I in Church-State Relations', in *Russian Orthodoxy Under the Old Regime*, ed. by Robert L. Nichols and Theofanis George Stavrou (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978), pp. 154–69 (pp. 157, 162).
[151] William Leatherbarrow, 'Conservatism in the Age of Alexander I and Nicholas I', in *A History of Russian Thought*, ed. by William Leatherbarrow and Derek Offord (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 95–115 (pp. 104–08).
[152] Kenworthy, *The Heart of Russia*, p. 43. Correspondence between Filaret and Antonii shows the depth of their relationship, see Kenworthy, *The Heart of Russia*, pp. 39–40.
[153] Ibid., p. 38.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid. Various tales, often derived from Diveevo sisters and local witnesses, attest to Serafim's involvement at the local Diveevo convent, and are the source of intrigue. These are collected in Leonid Chichagov's voluminous *Chronicles of the Serafimo-Diveyevo Monastery*. In Chapter XIX, for example, there are collected conversations with the sisters and his final behests concerning the convent, see Chichagov, *Chronicles of the Serafimo-Diveyevo Monastery*, pp. 409–28.
[156] Kenworthy, *The Heart of Russia*, p. 43.

Antonii to encourage the veneration of Serafim and establish him as standard bearer for their programme of ascetic reform.

Conceived in the years soon after Serafim's death, Sergii's *Life* suffered at the hands of the official censor, and it was only through the perseverance and support of Filaret and Antonii that this text saw the light of day.[157] Sergii lived at Sarov from 1818 until 1834 and shortly after Serafim's death, he was transferred to the Bethany monastery (*Spaso-Vifanskii Monastyr'*), a satellite monastery of Trinity-Sergius.[158] It was here that Sergii wrote this text in an atmosphere favourable to its production, benefitting from Filaret's and Antonii's support.[159] The foreword promotes Sergii as a qualified author, stating that the material for the *Life* was drawn from witness accounts of contemporary monks and his own direct impressions of Serafim.[160] Sergii's use of a vernacular language is significant; historic models were published in Church Slavonic, and in the context of a developing print culture a recognisable language was vital to a modern readership, even crucial to constructing that audience.[161]

Sergii completed his *Life* in 1837 and it was initially planned for publication alongside Serafim's spiritual instructions (*dukhovnye nastavleniia*) and the *Life* of another Sarov monk, Mark.[162] However, the text soon became embroiled in the complexities of censorship and it required Filaret's active involvement for the *Life* to be approved for print. In a letter to Antonii, Filaret wrote that he had edited Sergii's text 'to protect [the *Life*] from incorrect points of view or from contradictions'.[163] Keenly aware of the potential for difficulties, Filaret suggested in 1838 that 'it is better for [Serafim's] spiritual instructions to be censored separately, in order not to block their

[157] Stepashkin, *Serafim Sarovskii*, pp. 245–46; Rudi, 'Rannie zhitiia Serafima Sarovskogo', pp. 433–34.
[158] Stepashkin, *Serafim Sarovskii*, p. 245.
[159] Kenworthy, *The Heart of Russia*, p. 43.
[160] Sergii writes: 'Ia budu povestvovat' to, chto izvestno sovremennym emu Startsam Sarovskoi Pustyni, a chast'iu to, chto on mne sam skazyval po osobennoi ego ko mne doverennosti i liubvi, v raznye vremena moego sozhitel'stva s nim', see Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, p. 3.
[161] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Version, 1991), pp. 44–45.
[162] Bekasova, 'Rannie zhitiinye povestvovaniia o prepodobnom Serafime Sarovskom', pp. 146–47.
[163] Letter from Filaret to Antonii, quoted by Sergei Bychkov, 'Prepodobnyi Serafim i ego pervyi biograf', in *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima, ieromonakha, pustynnika i zatvornika Sarovskoi pustyni* (Moscow: Intekt, 2006), p. 266.

passage in the event of any challenges to the [Sergii's] *Life*'.[164] As a result, the *Life* of Mark and the spiritual instructions proceeded to publication without Serafim's *Life* in 1839.[165]

It was the inclusion of miraculous visions in Sergii's text that resulted in the three-year delay in publication, during which the Holy Synod sought to investigate the authenticity of the events related in the *Life*.[166] The Synod had for a long time been actively seeking to exert greater control over the wider Church in order to standardize the faith and stamp out heterodox forms of popular piety.[167] As a result, the Synod was 'very cautious about manifestations of the miraculous, […] virtually refusing to canonize new saints, and subjecting any alleged miracle even at recognized sites to rigorous investigation'.[168] The Synod's concerns were various, but were derived in part from fears of fraud being committed on lay believers and the promotion of subversive spirituality, such as Old Belief.[169] Sergii's text was held up by such Synodal opposition, and his status as a popular, uncanonised, spiritual figure was a key source of the caution toward miraculous tales in Sergii's *Life*.[170]

Sergii's *Life* was finally signed off by Archimandrite Agapit, the rector of Trinity-Sergius' Bethany seminary and published in 1841, albeit in redacted form.[171] In a letter to Antonii, dated 10 January 1855, Filaret wrote that 'even after the inquiry and investigation of the written text [by the Synod], certain parts were omitted'.[172] While Antonii was known to have been more enthusiastic about tales of the miraculous, Filaret, through his role as editor, was likely key to understating or

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[164] Letter from Filaret to Antonii, quoted in ibid., p. 267. See David W. Edwards, 'Russian Ecclesiastical Censorship during the Reign of Tsar Nicholas I', *Journal of Church and State*, 19, 1 (1977), 83–93 (p. 90), which details Filaret's other interactions with the Church censor. His role in the Pavskii affair is also indicative of his role in the conflicts concerning scriptural translations and the politics of religious authority, see Batalden, *Russian Bible Wars*, pp. 96–112.
[165] Rudi, 'Rannie zhitiia Serafima Sarovskogo', p. 428.
[166] Bekasova, 'Rannie zhitiinye povestvovaniia o prepodobnom Serafime Sarovskom', pp. 147–50, 169.
[167] Freeze, 'Institutionalizing Piety', pp. 212–17.
[168] Kenworthy, *The Heart of Russia*, p. 172. Indeed, only four saints were canonized between 1751 and 1861 and tensions manifested between the Church hierarchy and lay communities over the lack of canonical recognition of popular, local 'unofficial' saints. See Freeze, 'Institutionalizing Piety', pp. 219–20.
[169] Freeze, 'Institutionalizing Piety', pp. 218, 222.
[170] Kenworthy, *The Heart of Russia*, p. 43.
[171] Rudi, 'Rannie zhitiia Serafima Sarovskogo', p. 434.
[172] Bekasova, 'Rannie zhitiinye povestvovaniia o prepodobnom Serafime Sarovskom', p. 151.

redacting elements of the text, using his knowledge of censorship politics.[173] Since an original manuscript of Sergii's *Life* has yet to be found, we can only speculate about what precisely was removed from Sergii's text.[174] Nevertheless, the mystical passages and embellishments of Georgii's *Life*, highlighted in section one of this chapter and which built on Sergii's text, are suggestive of the elements that were likely redacted during the censorship process.

Georgii's *Life* was first printed in *The Lighthouse* (*Maiak*), a conservative journal offering readers a mix of articles and work that reflected the reactionary tendencies of 'Official Nationality', patriotism and native mysticism.[175] Like Sergii, he was another contemporary of Serafim and lived at Sarov from 1827 to 1833.[176] His familiarity with Serafim is highlighted in the title of the *Life*, which states that the text is produced from the notes of a disciple of Serafim ('[…] izvlechennoe iz zapisok uchenika ego.'). Like Sergii's *Life*, Georgii's claims that the text draws on witness accounts.[177] Georgii also came into contact with the world of Trinity-Sergius when he transferred to live at the Bethany monastery in 1841.[178] In a letter to Antonii, just after the publication of Georgii's *Life*, Filaret wrote: 'as to the life description of father Serafim published in *Maiak*, I think Georgii is a little to blame. He gave someone his work to copy, but I don't think with any ambition to publish. Ask him about it and tell me. Publishing books without the agreement of the Holy Synod at the present time, they say, is nothing to be surprised about'.[179] Like Sergii, it seems Georgii had little control over his text's path to publication and relied on the support of others. Rudi's archival work suggests that Georgii obtained the uncensored version of Sergii's *Life*, which he likely used as the foundation for his own longer text.[180] A collection held in the Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences (*Biblioteka Rossiiskoi*

[173] Kenworthy, *The Heart of Russia*, pp. 213–14.
[174] Stepashkin, *Serafim Sarovskii*, p. 248.
[175] Rudi, 'Rannie zhitiia Serafima Sarovskogo', pp. 428–29; Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, p. 100. Official Nationality, the doctrine of political nationalism disseminated by the government of Nicholas I, and the role of *Maiak*, will be considered further in Chapter Three of this dissertation.
[176] Stepashkin, *Serafim Sarovskii*, p. 250.
[177] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* pp. 3–4.
[178] Stepashkin, *Serafim Sarovskii*, p. 250.
[179] Ibid., p. 250.
[180] Rudi, 'Rannie zhitiia Serafima Sarovskogo', p. 434.

Akademii Nauk) contains what appears to be a manuscript of Sergii's text. Alongside the principal script are edits belonging to another's pen. When read together, the text with its edits is almost identical to the *Life* by Georgii published in *Maiak*.[181] Georgii likely acquired the original manuscript at the Bethany Monastery, which had placed him in close proximity to Agapit, the censor of Sergii's text.[182] Again, Trinity-Sergius appears vital to the publication of a *Life* of Serafim, as an environment supportive to the literary endeavours of Georgii.

Judging by Filaret's letter after the publication of the *Life*, it appears Georgii's text somehow slipped through the censor's net, and was published without the author's consent. In the context of the 'formidable structure of censorship', created by Nicholas I, this seems strange and deserves further archival research for potential answers.[183] Its publication might be explained by the evidence of a shift in the Synod towards accommodating the miracles of local popular 'saints' from the late 1830s, reflecting the Church's 'growing sense of the need to co-opt popular Orthodoxy, to bring the worldly–and believers–into the Church rather than drive them away'.[184] However, this new 'liberal' approach clearly did not benefit Sergii's text, despite it being published only three years prior. Regardless of the conundrums of censorship, the impact of Georgii's *Life* certainly appears to have been profound. In a letter published in *Maiak*, a reader wrote: 'I read through the *Life* with indescribable joy. A heartfelt Russian thank you to you for giving a place to such instructive articles in your journal'.[185] The letter suggests there existed a keen appetite for tales of Serafim's life in the decade of their production.

In creating their works, Sergii and Georgii were supported by the ecosystem of Trinity-Sergius, with its leadership devoted to a contemplative, ascetic spirituality. Filaret and Antonii, as benefactors of their literary projects, encouraged and guided both these early *Lives* to print. Georgii was further supported by *Maiak*, a platform devoting space to the revival of a Russian ascetic ideal

[181] Ibid., p. 432.
[182] Ibid., p. 434.
[183] Edwards, 'Russian Ecclesiastical Censorship during the Reign of Tsar Nicholas I', p. 89.
[184] Freeze, 'Institutionalizing Piety', pp. 231–35.
[185] From a letter written by Lev Kavelin, published in 1845 in *Maiak*. See Stepashkin, *Serafim Sarovskii*, p. 252.

and tsarist nationalism of the era. By adopting ascetic narratives and motifs, Sergii and Georgii knowingly adopted the form and content of archaic models, thereby lending their works authenticity for their modern audience. In this way, these texts could be co-opted into the wider debates about ascetic discourse in nineteenth-century Russia. These two early *Lives* of Serafim used an archaic form to lend credibility to the recovered tradition of ascetism being promoted, and to the role of Serafim as a standard bearer of these ideas. As we shall see in Chapter Two, this unique ascetic inheritance would make Serafim emblematic in the developing discourse of cultural nationalism of the era.

2.2 The Publication of Ioasaf's *Life*

While Ioasaf also adopted an archaic ascetic form for his text, the publishing history of his *Life* betrays an ulterior motive to his publication. As with Sergii and Georgii, Ioasaf was a contemporary of Serafim, living at Sarov from 1820.[186] Despite being backed by imperial patrons, including the daughter of Nicholas I, Mariia Nikolaevna (1819–76), Ioasaf failed to progress up the monastic ranks and he finally left Sarov in 1847.[187] He became known amongst the highest classes of Saint Petersburg and was received by the imperial family on a visit in 1849.[188] Unlike the *Lives* of Sergii and Georgii, Ioasaf's text did not garner the support of Trinity-Sergius and its leading figures. Filaret, in a report to the Holy Synod in 1861, stated that 'Ioasaf's *Life*, and the money for its publication, were drawn from the author's own effort and resources'.[189] There appears to have been no ecclesiastical institution promoting Ioasaf's literary endeavours.

Ioasaf described the first two *Lives* of Serafim as unsatisfactory,[190] and he worked with the St Petersburg schoolteacher, N. E. Andreevskii, to prepare his own text for publication.[191] There is little information about Andreevskii, but it appears he compiled, and therefore presumably edited, the

[186] Bychkov, 'Prepodobnyi Serafim i ego pervyi biograf', p. 269.
[187] Ibid., p. 272.
[188] Ibid., p. 276.
[189] Bekasova, 'Rannie zhitiinye povestvovaniia o prepodobnom Serafime Sarovskom', p. 165.
[190] Stepashkin, *Serafim Sarovskii*, p. 256.
[191] Bekasova, 'Rannie zhitiinye povestvovaniia o prepodobnom Serafime Sarovskom', p. 164.

text.[192] Despite his efforts, particularly in collecting new witness accounts, it is Ioasaf's *Life*, perhaps more than any other, that has attracted the most intrigue and criticism. In certain respects, his account reads as a defence of Serafim's role at Diveevo and a manifesto for his own position at the monastic complex. He self-confidently describes himself as a disciple of Serafim, even portraying himself as a successor, as the chosen guardian and trustee of the Diveevo community ('Starets zhe […] povtoriat' i napominal mne vse […] osobenno chtoby ia ne ostavil sirot diveevskikh i ustroil u nikh vse.').[193] This claim and his involvement with Diveevo in the years after Serafim's death was the source of much community unrest.[194] Effectively, Ioasaf's desire to manage Diveevo led to a split at the convent and for this reason later writers criticised him.[195] In his *Chronicles of the Serafimo-Diveevo Monastery* (1896), Chichagov negatively assessed Ioasaf and his work, writing that the Hieromonk was 'blinded by his ignorance and lack of education' and that Ioasaf published his story to 'give credence to the friendship which, he alleged, the great *starets* felt towards him' and to 'shed glory on him'.[196]

Even Sarov had doubts about their former monk. In a letter of 1849, the Heguman, Isaiia, stated that 'one has to marvel how the public blindly follow the new Mohamet' and questioned the veracity of Ioasaf's account ('[…] i o kamne, na koem budto stoial Serafim 1001 noch', o kormlenii iz ruk Serafimom medvedia, […] vse eto odno vydumka Ivana.').[197] As noted in section one of this chapter, Serafim's prayer vigil on the stone was recalled in both Sergii's and Georgii's *Lives*, and a reference to feeding the bear was first depicted in Georgii's *Life*. Perhaps this betrays a wider antipathy of Isaiia to the tales of Serafim, although it is clear he was specifically displeased with Ioasaf and his *Life*. Isaiia bitterly noted in his letter that 'the actual stone [of Serafim's prayer vigil]

[192] Bychkov, 'Prepodobnyi Serafim i ego pervyi biograf', p. 276.
[193] Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, p. 26; Rudi, 'Rannie zhitiia Serafima Sarovskogo', p. 429.
[194] Rudi, 'Rannie zhitiia Serafima Sarovskogo', p. 429.
[195] Ibid.; Bychkov, 'Prepodobnyi Serafim i ego pervyi biograf', pp. 263–64.
[196] Chichagov, *Chronicles of the Serafimo-Diveyevo Monastery*, p. 442.
[197] Bychkov, 'Prepodobnyi Serafim i ego pervyi biograf', pp. 270–71.

has been transformed into a diamond for Ivan', suggesting a selfish motivation for Ioasaf's publication.[198]

Regardless of this criticism, Ioasaf's *Life* gained success amongst the Petersburg public and his fame spread throughout the highest circles of society.[199] Ioasaf dedicated his life to collecting tales of Serafim and continued to enlarge his account with new tales across several publications.[200] Sergei Bychkov, in his essay on Ioasaf and his *Life*, tries to redress some of the negative image of Ioasaf developed in Chichagov's *Chronicles*.[201] Serafim suffered malicious rumours regarding his spiritual counsel to the Diveevo sisters and his violation of the monastic rule of Sarov in counselling both male and female visitors.[202] Ioasaf may have been motivated to write his *Life* as a corrective to these lurid claims made against Serafim. However, it is prudent to stay alert to the politics surrounding this text and its gestation. In 1861, Ioasaf returned to Diveevo, bringing to a head community tensions: half sought his leadership, the other viewed him as an enemy.[203] The strife caused is presented in detail in Chichagov's *Chronicles*, including reports related to the investigation into the affair.[204]

It is clear that Ioasaf was a controversial presence at the Sarov-Diveevo complex. His *Life* was the product of his personal effort and support from outside the walls of the monastery. Through the observations of others, Ioasaf appears to have been motivated by a political interest in the management of Diveevo, and his depictions of the convent, its development and the favour shown to him by Serafim appear designed to respond to his desire for personal gain. By adopting the archaic form in his *Life*, Ioasaf could legitimise his leadership role at Diveevo in the eyes of the aristocratic, influential audience who supported his work. Significantly, it is likely that Princess Mariia

[198] Ibid., p. 271.
[199] Bekasova, 'Rannie zhitiinye povestvovaniia o prepodobnom Serafime Sarovskom', p. 166.
[200] Stepashkin, *Serafim Sarovskii*, p. 256.
[201] Bychkov, 'Prepodobnyi Serafim i ego pervyi biograf', p. 264.
[202] Ibid., pp. 267–69.
[203] Ibid., p. 278.
[204] See chapter xxvii of Chichagov, *Chronicles of the Serafimo-Diveyevo Monastery*.

had a hand in pushing the work through the stages of censorship.[205] This is a text that repurposes the archaic form for personal-political purposes and in creating a recognisably ascetic figure in Serafim, Ioasaf attempts to justify, even sanctify, his own position by proximity.

There was clearly a demand for saints' *Lives* in nineteenth-century Russia. As hagiographers, the authors of Serafim's early *Lives* sought didactically to disclose a Christian message and promote a cult of Serafim to their audience.[206] The publishing history of the *Lives* draws attention to the specific religious, cultural, political and personal demands influencing the function of these works. It is by identifying these demands that I have indicated the catalyst for the author's adoption of the archaic ascetic form of saints' *Lives*. Through the employment of ascetic narratives and motifs, Sergii, Georgii and Ioasaf proved their familiarity with the literary tradition and established a resemblance with older models of the form. In the hands of Filaret and Antonii, key figures in the development of an ascetic ideology, Sergii's and Georgii's texts appear as vehicles to disseminate an ascetic spirituality to a willing nineteenth-century audience. Ioasaf's text, while also employing the familiar ascetic form and promoting a traditional representation of asceticism, appears more as personal manifesto that appeals to its aristocratic audience for control over Diveevo. In each case, the use of a traditional form, authoritative to the reading audience, provided the perfect platform within which to propagate ideology and personal manifestos.

Unlike the archaic models they adopt, these *Lives* were published in a vernacular language, intended for consumption by a wider audience outside the monastic walls. It was significant that these *Lives* were accessible and could therefore be suitable platforms for the mediation of contested authority. Through their didactic tales, they could relay to the audience modern projects seeking to shape the national idea in nineteenth-century Russia, relying on a recovery of the past. In this way,

[205] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, p. 101.
[206] Perlina, 'Toward a Concept of an Ideal Hero in Dostoevskij's "Brat'ja Karamazovy"', p. 66; Hennessey Olsen, 'De Historiis Sanctorum', p. 413; C. H. Lawrence, *St. Edmund of Abingdon: A Study of Hagiography and History* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 7.

the early *Lives* responded to the wider cultural and political dynamics of the era. It is to this that we turn in the next chapters: firstly, the accommodation of a revived contemplative tradition that formed the foundation of a project of cultural nationalism uniting certain ecclesiastical and lay intellectuals; and secondly, the reflection in the early *Lives* of a regressive image of nationhood supplied by the government's policy of political nationalism.

'*Единый народ "богоносец" - это русский народ*.'[207]

Chapter Two

Modernity, Cultural Nationalism, and the Early *Lives* of Serafim

The early nineteenth century witnessed an episode in Russian intellectual thought which saw Orthodox Christianity transformed from a repudiated symbol of Russian backwardness to the celebrated source of Russian exceptionalism.[208] This chapter details the way in which the early *Lives* responded to the cultural demand for works of contemplative spirituality by accommodating the modern phenomenon of spiritual revival in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Russia. This revival was characterised by the dissemination of a 'rediscovered' ascetic spirituality drawn from ancient patristic texts.[209] By casting Serafim as a progenitor of the awakening of Orthodoxy in the early nineteenth century, it becomes clear that the early *Lives* of Serafim are part of a wider programme of recovering tradition, re-enchanting a society largely divorced from its Byzantine roots through projects of cultural nationalism.[210]

As will be explored in this chapter, Serafim's early *Lives* were emblematic of the symbiotic relationship between cultural nationalism and religious revival, which emerged in the second quarter of nineteenth-century Russia. Whereas political nationalism is concerned with the acquisition of power, self-determination, civic duty and statecraft, cultural nationalism is commonly associated with the Romantic revival of national spirit.[211] As John Hutchison writes, it is a 'movement of moral regeneration which seeks to reunite the different aspects of the nation […] by returning to the creative life-principle of the nation'.[212] Drawing on insights from the work of David Martin and Charles Taylor, I argue in the first section of this chapter that religious revival represented a modern

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[207] Fedor Dostoevskii, *Besy* (Moscow: Pravda, 1990), p. 258.
[208] Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls*, p. 46.
[209] Nichols, 'The Orthodox Elders (Startsy) of Imperial Russia', p. 3.
[210] Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls*, p. 33; Hobsbawm, 'Inventing Traditions', pp. 1–14; Laura Engelstein, *Slavophile Empire: Imperial Russia's Illiberal Path* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), p. 125.
[211] Rabow-Edling, *Slavophile Thought and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism*, pp. 2–5.
[212] John Hutchison quoted in Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 178.

trend, conceived by Jose Casanova as 'religious de-privatisation'.[213] The fusion of religious revival with romantic conceptions of the nation generated a dynamic that was productive for the portrayal of Serafim of Sarov as an exemplar of ascetic spirituality.

The second section of this chapter takes a closer look at the nature of the revived ascetic spirituality represented in Serafim's early *Lives*. By virtue of their depiction of *nepsis* and *hesychia*, silent inner prayer and deification, Serafim's early *Lives* represent a key strand of the patristic revival known as hesychasm. By drawing on the *Life* of Sergii Radonezhskii (1314–92), the writings of Nil Sorskii (c. 1433–1508) and the teachings contained in the *Dobrotoliubie* (first published in 1793 and again in 1822), the early *Lives* established Serafim as the latest standard-bearer of a pre-existing spirituality.[214] This ensured Serafim's significance and relevance to the projects of cultural nationalism being led by the clerical and lay religious intellectuals of the 1840s.

1. Secularisation and Religious Revival

Throughout the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, if not uniformly or consistently, rulers from Peter I (r. 1682–1725) to Catherine II (r. 1762–96) co-opted aspects of the Western development project and largely advocated the adoption of Western and secular norms and ideas.[215] Through the removal of the patriarch, synodalisation, bureaucratic state control and professionalisation of the clergy, the Russian Orthodox Church found itself increasingly stripped of political and economic authority.[216] Despite being a state religion, the borders of Orthodoxy were largely restricted to the spiritual domain by Peter's reforms, and state intrusion into Church affairs continued to advance throughout Catherine's rule, evidenced by her policy of secularisation (or

[213] Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, p. 17.
[214] Kallistos Ware, 'St. Nikodimos and the Philokalia', in *The Philokalia: A Classic Text of Orthodox Spirituality*, ed. by Brock Bingaman and Bradley Nassif (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 9–35 (p. 33).
[215] Leatherbarrow, 'Conservatism in the Age of Alexander I and Nicholas I', p. 96; Nichols, 'The Orthodox Elders (Startsy) of Imperial Russia', p. 4.
[216] Robert L. Nichols and Theofanis George Stravrou, 'Introduction', in *Russian Orthodoxy Under the Old Regime*, pp. 3–17 (p. 4); Freeze, 'Institutionalizing Piety', pp. 212–15.

rather, confiscation) of monastic lands between 1763 and 1764.[217] As a result, the Orthodox Church's ability to discharge its duties was seriously hampered throughout this era.[218]

Alongside its disenfranchisement, the theology and teachings of the diminished Church took a decidedly Western turn, further marginalising Russia's historic Eastern Christian spirituality.[219] Hesychasm, as a key component of this spirituality, had been the sanctioned vehicle for the mystical experience of God from 1350.[220] The hesychastic tradition had travelled to Russia in the fourteenth century as part of the so-called second South Slav influence, leaving its imprint on Sergii Radonezhskii and his *Life*.[221] In fifteenth-century Russia, the tradition found a skilled representative in Nil Sorskii, who propagated teachings on contemplative prayer direct from the Church Fathers.[222] However, in the political machinations of the fifteenth century, this spirituality became largely dormant, compounded by the later reforms of Peter I and Catherine II.[223] In particular, through the suppression of its monasteries, Russia lost the incubators of ascetic spirituality and became

[217] Freeze, 'Institutionalizing Piety', pp. 212–15; Nichols, 'The Orthodox Elders (Startsy) of Imperial Russia', p. 5. The creation of the Holy Synod was in particular key to shaping the contours of Orthodoxy, not least in its role in censorship and combating heresy, which impacted the early *Lives* of Serafim as shown in Chapter One. See Donald W. Treadgold, 'Russian Orthodoxy and Society', in *Russian Orthodoxy Under the Old Regime*, pp. 21–42 (pp. 22–23).

[218] Nichols and Stravrou, 'Introduction', pp. 4, 6.

[219] Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls,* pp. 27–31.

[220] Børtnes, *Visions of Glory*, p. 112. This first flourishing of hesychasm was founded on the writings of Gregory of Sinai (1255–1346) and Gregory Palamas (1296–1359) who together provided hesychasm's theological, practical, and in the case of Palamas, political foundations, see Kallistos Ware, 'The Jesus Prayer in St Gregory of Sinai', *The Eastern Churches Review*, 4 (1), (1972), 3–22 (pp. 3–4); Børtnes, *Visions of Glory*, pp. 111–12. Palamas was an ardent critic of dualism as promoted by the Bogomils, a movement considered heretical. For Palamas, the body when purified of evil can be sanctified and the site of deification. His victory over heretical ideas was important for the creation of an official ideology and spiritual rejuvenation across the fourteenth-century Orthodox world See Børtnes, *Visions of Glory*, pp. 109–14; John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), p. 143.

[221] Børtnes, *Visions of Glory*, pp. 109–16.

[222] Ziolkowski, *Hagiography and Modern Russian Literature*, pp. 128–30; Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology, Part One, Volume Five in the Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, trans. by Robert L. Nichols (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1979), pp. 19–26; Nichols, 'The Orthodox Elders (Startsy) of Imperial Russia', p. 9.

[223] Nichols, 'Orthodox Spirituality in Imperial Russia' , pp. 25–26. Nil Sorskii led the Trans-Volgan movement. His contemplative monasticism, defined by the rejection of monastic property, led to clashes with the monasticism promoted by Joseph of Volokolamsk (c. 1439–1515), which was focussed more on external manifestations of piety and ritual. Ultimately, the Josephites won political favour and established their form of monasticism as dominant. See Ziolkowski, *Hagiography and Modern Russian Literature*, pp. 128–30; Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology, Part One*, pp. 19–26.

estranged from its traditional religion.[224] Both clergy and intellectuals in Catherinian Russia absorbed intellectual developments from the European enlightenment, which in turn shaped the nature of Orthodox spirituality.[225] Emblematic of this shift was Catherine's' visit to Trinity-Sergius in 1762, where she heard sermons on reason and its compatibility with religion: Metropolitan Platon (Levshin, 1749–1812) of Moscow gave a sermon that referred to Catherine's love of science.[226] For those nineteenth-century intellectuals seeking to recover Orthodoxy's Byzantine ascetic foundations, the Church of the eighteenth century appeared diminished, Westernised and rootless.[227]

Despite the religious nature of Russia's eighteenth-century enlightenment,[228] secularisation, being the shift 'from the religious mode to the secular',[229] was evident among the elite classes of Russia during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. If compared to contemporary European societies, Russia's experience of secularisation appears as a typical modernisation process at that time. According to this classic theory of modernisation, a modernising nation undergoes a progressive shift from unenlightened to enlightened; it follows a structural trend toward secularisation, industrialisation, scientific achievement, educational development and the emergence of political and civic structures that herald the nation state.[230] For many years, the constituent element of secularisation was considered the 'undisputed paradigm' and its prevalence in Russia of the Petrine and Catherinian eras would accord with the generally accepted theory.[231]

However, this classic paradigm has been increasingly challenged by contemporary scholars who have sought to account for the phenomenon of religious revival in the modern context, such as

[224] Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls,* pp. 28–31.
[225] Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *Religion and Enlightenment in Catherinian Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2013), pp. 12–13.
[226] Richard S. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power, Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy, Volume One* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 121.
[227] Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls,* pp. 27–31, 51–55.
[228] Wirtschafter, *Religion and Enlightenment in Catherinian Russia*, pp. 12–21.
[229] Martin, *On Secularisation*, p. 18.
[230] Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, p. 17; Smith, *Nationalism and Modernisation*, pp. 2–4.
[231] Martin, *On Secularisation*, p. 18.

Russia's experience of spiritual renewal at the turn of the nineteenth century. As Engelstein notes, 'the nineteenth century produced the story of Europe as the land of reason and progress but also of Russia as a land of Christian endurance and cultural inertia'.[232] The tide turned after the secular progress instituted by the reforms of Peter and Catherine, and Russia witnessed a reversal of the secularisation process.[233] It is tempting to frame such a revival as a reactionary, anti-modern movement. Yet to do so is to ignore alternative accounts of modern societal development that reveal Russia's experience to be consistent with a certain variant within modernity.

Charles Taylor asserts that modernity takes different expressions in different civilisations and suggests there is a multiplicity of paradigms rather than a single account of modernity.[234] It is the secularisation thesis that Taylor and other contemporary social scientists find particularly contentious. For Taylor, religion does not necessarily subtract from society in the process of modernisation, rather it exists within a pluralisation of alternatives as society modernises: from a position where God is present everywhere, faith in God becomes one of multiple options.[235] Similarly viewing secularisation as one possible alternative, Jose Casanova argues that religion commonly becomes limited to a 'spiritual' domain during the modernisation of society.[236] As functions of the state develop, such as economic and social services, these functions take over aspects of governance previously reserved to the church, leaving religious activity to be concerned solely with spiritual matters. From this position, Casanova argues that a subsequent decline of religion is only an historical option and not a structural trend.[237] He suggests that, in certain circumstances, religion can be 'de-privatised', a process 'whereby religion abandons its assigned place in the private sphere and re-enters the undifferentiated public sphere […] to take part in the ongoing process of contestation, discursive legitimation, and redrawing of the boundaries'.[238] In this account, religion can return to

[232] Engelstein, *Slavophile Empire*, p. 101.
[233] Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls*, pp. 59–88.
[234] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 21.
[235] Ibid., pp. 26–29; 423–24.
[236] Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, pp. 20–25. Casanova terms this process differentiation.
[237] Ibid., pp. 213–14.
[238] Ibid., pp. 65–66.

the public arena as a 'mobilising or integrating normative force' particularly when secular ideologies have become discredited or lost their force.[239] The upsurges in religiosity witnessed in post-1918 Britain and Reagan's America are given by Casanova as examples of such 'de-privatisation'.[240] His theory of religious de-privatisation in modern societies is particularly instructive for the Russian experience of religious revival.

Secularisation in Russia was finally arrested around the turn of the nineteenth century when religious revival spread in principally two forms. The first was evangelical, Protestant, and accommodating of Western mysticism and defined the reign of Alexander I (r. 1801–25).[241] Alexander's zeal for pietist spirituality, together with the latent Christian universalism of the Holy Alliance, marked the highpoint of the Romanov dynasty's enthusiasm for the West.[242] The other revival consisted of the recovery of Russia's Byzantine heritage of ascetic spirituality, with a particular focus on the practices of hesychasm. One inadvertent result of Catherine's monastic reform was the support it gave to this renewal of ascetic spirituality: while the Church had been impoverished, it was left in a better state to focus purely on spiritual duties, thereby allowing the seeds of ascetic renewal to grow.[243] Paradoxically, despite his Western leanings, Alexander's rule also provided a political climate supportive of religious liberalisation, which was crucial for the concurrent revival of 'traditional' Orthodoxy.[244] It was this 'recovered' spirituality that was proffered by key clerics and intellectuals as a unifying ideology for all Orthodox Christians; it became a mobilising and integrating force to shape the conception of Russia, its religion and its people.[245] In this way, religious faith in early nineteenth-century Russia was reborn and re-entered the contests of the public square.

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[239] Ibid., p. 227.
[240] Ibid., pp. 135–66.
[241] Batalden, *Russian Bible Wars*, pp. 30–35; Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls,* pp. 73–74; Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, p. 73.
[242] Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology, Part One*, p. 162.
[243] See Freeze, 'Institutionalizing Piety', p. 214.
[244] Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, *Part One*, pp. 156–61; Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, pp. 71–73.
[245] Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls*, pp. 45–58, 64–78.

1.1. Russia's Symbiosis of Religious Revival and Cultural Nationalism

There existed at the turn of the nineteenth century a gulf between Russia's pious Orthodox people and its Westernised, educated and secularised elite.[246] By the 1840s, the decade in which Serafim's early *Lives* were published, the elite practice of imitating the West that had prevailed since the reforms of Peter the Great was no longer acceptable to certain clerical and lay religious intellectuals.[247] These figures sought to bridge this gulf by appeal to a common set of national characteristics, of which Orthodoxy was the primary example.[248] Through the 'recovery' of traditional spirituality from the monasteries of Mount Athos and Moldavia, Russia's religious revival acted as a 're-Christianisation' of Russia that spoke to elites and peasants alike.[249] In the context of post-Napoleonic, revolutionary Europe, it was in Russia's 'unique' Orthodox identity that they sought the seeds of Russia's moral regeneration and resurgence.[250] Often working across the clerical divide, these intellectuals sought to harness the 'spirit' of the country for national renewal in projects of cultural nationalism.[251]

By the 1840s, the Trinity-Sergius monastery was representative of this revived ascetic spirituality, and, alongside the famous Optina Hermitage (*Pustyn'*), was vital to creating an ecosystem supportive of contemplative spiritual practices.[252] Orthodox churchmen and theologians looked to Russia's historic Orthodoxy, defined by its ascetic and contemplative dimensions, as the foundation for what they believed was Russia's Providential mission in universal Christian renewal.[253] The conversion of Kievan Rus' to Orthodoxy was seen as a historic choice, and it was Russia's 'unique' ascetic inheritance that would be mobilised in the aftermath of the Napoleonic

[246] Rabow-Edling, *Slavophile Thought and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism*, pp. 50–57.
[247] Ibid., pp. 35–37.
[248] Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls*, pp. 45–58, 64–78.
[249] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, pp. 31–38; Nichols, 'The Orthodox Elders (Startsy) of Imperial Russia', pp. 2–3; Gregory L. Freeze, 'The Rechristianization of Russia: The Church and Popular Religion, 1750–1850', *Studia Slavica Finlandensia*, 7 (1990), 101–36 (p. 102).
[250] Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls*, pp. 45–58, 64–78.
[251] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, pp. 90, 102; Rabow-Edling, *Slavophile Thought and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism*, pp. 31–34; Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls*, pp. 64–71.
[252] Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls*, pp. 66–67; Kenworthy, *The Heart of Russia*, p. 35–44.
[253] Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls*, p. 66.

invasions to provide the foundation for a Russian Christian enlightenment (*prosveshchenie*) that would challenge the rational conception of Enlightenment from the West.[254]

As detailed in Chapter One, Metropolitan Filaret was closely associated with promoting this ascetic inheritance, as exemplified by his support for the publication of Sergii's and Georgii's *Lives* of Serafim. For Filaret, the adoption of the European Enlightenment represented the beginning of Russia's descent into ignorance:[255] it was in 'authentic' Byzantine Christianity that Russia's unique identity could be found.[256] The dissemination of ascetic texts was fundamental to the recovery of this traditional spirituality and took its cue from the life and work of Paisii Velichkovskii (1722–94).[257] His translation project of the Slavonic-language *Dobrotoliubie*, a key source of hesychast writings, brought Eastern Christian and Byzantine texts on the ascetic and mystical tradition to the attention of monastic readers, and later to readers outside the monastic walls.[258] Alongside the publication of the Slavonic *Dobrotoliubie*, Paisii provided a model of spiritual eldership that promoted hesychast spirituality and was responsible for instructing hundreds of disciples.[259] Scores of Paisii's disciples travelled throughout the monasteries of Russia, many finding a welcome reception for this revived spirituality.[260] Supporting these efforts were key figures of Church authority such as Bishop Tikhon (Sokolov) of Voronezh (1724–83), Metropolitan Gavriil (Petrov) of St Petersburg (1730–1801), and Metropolitan Platon of Moscow, each of whom was instrumental in the promotion in Russia of

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[254] Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia and the Russians* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), pp. 36–41; Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls*, pp. 67–68.
[255] Nichols, 'The Orthodox Elders (Startsy) of Imperial Russia', p. 11.
[256] Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls*, pp. 72–87. Filaret viewed the writings of the neptic Fathers as representative of Russia's unique identity and he raised the profile of such texts during his role in religious education by promoting curricula focussed on their study. See also Robert L. Nichols, 'Orthodoxy and Russia's Enlightenment', in *Russian Orthodoxy Under the Old Regime*, pp. 65–89 (pp. 83–84).
[257] Paisii was a Ukrainian-born monk who settled on Mount Athos and later in Moldova, gaining followers who sought his spiritual guidance and supported his translation project. See Paert*, Spiritual Elders*, pp. 31–36. Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls,* p. 32.
[258] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, pp. 34–40; Andrew Louth, 'The Influence of the *Philokalia* in the Orthodox World', in *The Philokalia: A Classic Text of Orthodox Spirituality*, pp. 50–60 (p. 52).
[259] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, pp. 31–38; John Anthony McGuckin, 'The Making of the *Philokalia*: a Tale of Monks and Manuscripts', in *The Philokalia: A Classic Text of Orthodox Spirituality*, pp. 36–49 (p. 43).
[260] According to Sergii Chetverikov, Paisii's impact was felt on 107 monasteries in Russia. See Sergii Chetverikov, *Starets Paisii Velichkovskii* (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1980), pp. 316–20.

patristic texts and practices.[261] Platon's devotion to clerical education and his role in rebuilding Optina Pustyn' paved the way for the later clerical efforts to disseminate ascetic spirituality.[262]

By supporting the spread of ascetic literature such as the *Dobrotoliubie*, Filaret sought to delineate the conceptual boundaries between Russian Orthodoxy and Western expressions of Christian faith. These patristic texts represented for him the 'true face of Orthodoxy'.[263] More than this, as Michelson notes, Orthodoxy constituted for Filaret 'an imperial project to liberate Russia from "Europe" and to spread the "light" of authentic Christianity to "the West"'.[264] In this project, he was assisted by Father Makarii (Ivanov, 1788–1860) of Optina Pustyn', who undertook the translation and publication of the Eastern Church Fathers into Russian.[265] By adopting vernacular Russian, these patristic texts could help promote 'authentic' expressions of Russian faith to Russia's literate laity.[266]

Alongside this clerical project of spiritual regeneration, lay religious intellectuals known as the Slavophiles also sought in Russia's Orthodox identity the seeds of renewal and national expression.[267] Members of the Society of Wisdom Lovers (*Obshchestvo Liubomudriia*), a precursor to the Slavophiles, took the lead from German Romantic philosophy to discuss and promote ideas of romantic nationalism.[268] The *Liubomudry* argued that 'the national problem could not be solved through political struggle for modern forms of national existence, but purely in the spiritual sphere, through the development of the organic principle embodied in a nation's history'.[269] Slavophile figures such as Aleksei Khomiakov (1804–60), Ivan Kireevskii (1806–56) and Konstantin Aksakov

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[261] Nichols, 'The Orthodox Elders (Startsy) of Imperial Russia', pp. 7–10; Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, pp. 55–59.
[262] Wirtschafter, *Religion and Enlightenment in Catherinian Russia*, pp. 14–21; Nichols, 'The Orthodox Elders (Startsy) of Imperial Russia', p. 8.
[263] Nichols and Stravrou, 'Introduction', in *Russian Orthodoxy Under the Old Regime*, p. 11.
[264] Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls*, p. 68.
[265] Abbott Gleason, *European and Muscovite: Ivan Kireevsky and the Origins of Slavophilism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 236; Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls*, p. 54; Nichols, 'The Orthodox Elders (Startsy) of Imperial Russia', pp. 13–15.
[266] Nichols and Stravrou, 'Introduction', p. 6; Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls*, pp. 35–36.
[267] Rabow-Edling, *Slavophile Thought and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism*, p. 87.
[268] The *Obshchestvo Liubomudriia* met during the 1820s, see Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, pp. 64–69; Gleason, *European and Muscovite*, p. 32.
[269] Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p.68.

(1817–60) continued this romantic tradition into the 1840s and cast Russia as saviour of a decadent and degenerate West.[270] They thought that by returning to 'authentic Orthodoxy', the estranged educated elite would reunite with the people (*narod*) to assume Russia's rightful place in history.[271] As Walicki notes, the project was 'a utopian attempt to rehabilitate and revive a lost tradition', the purpose of which was moral regeneration and national glory.[272] Rather than a political campaign to support the regime over which Nicholas I (r. 1825–55) presided, Slavophilism was a romantic programme of cultural nationalism seeking to recover a lost ideal.[273]

For Slavophiles such as Kireevskii, the source of Russia's national foundation were the ancient Orthodox centres of Constantinople, Syria and Mount Athos, which in previous centuries had transmitted ascetic discourse across the monasteries of Russia to the pious *narod*.[274] Encouraged by his wife, a devout woman who had been a spiritual daughter of Serafim of Sarov, Kireevskii became closely involved with his spiritual father Makarii of Optina in his translation project of ascetic literature and it was in *The Muscovite* (*Moskvitianin*), a journal edited by Kireevskii, that Paisii Velichkovskii's *Life* was published.[275] While it might be argued Kireevskii's philosophical views were merely a variation of European conservative romanticism, it was his efforts that helped shape the discourse on ascetism in lay intellectual Orthodox circles.[276]

Texts such as Serafim's early *Lives*, not least those encouraged by Filaret, could be expected to perform a key role in the dissemination of the revived ascetic spirituality by pointing to its historic sources and teaching the fundamentals of hesychasm. Despite its personal-political genesis, even

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[270] Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls,* p. 51; Rabow-Edling, *Slavophile Thought and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism*, p. 44.
[271] Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls*, p. 51.
[272] Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p. 454; Rabow-Edling, *Slavophile Thought and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism*, pp. 86–92.
[273] Leatherbarrow, 'Conservatism in the Age of Alexander I and Nicholas I', p. 111.
[274] Rabow-Edling, *Slavophile Thought and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism*, pp. 90–92.
[275] Engelstein, *Slavophile Empire*, pp. 113–114; Aleksandr Koshelev, 'Istoriia obrashcheniia Ivana Vasil'evicha' in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii I. V. Kireevskogo, Tom I* (Farnborough: Gregg International, 1970), pp. 285–87; Gleason, *European and Muscovite*, pp. 137–42; Pawel Rojek, 'Post-Secular Metaphysics', in *Beyond Modernity: Russian Religious Philosophy and Post Secularism*, ed. by Artur Mrówczyński-Van Allen, Teresa Obolevitch, Paweł Rojek, (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2016), pp. 97–135 (p. 121); Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, p. 100. Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls,* pp. 33, 88.
[276] Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, p. 160; Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls,* p. 33.

Ioasaf's *Life* disseminated the ascetic ideal to its educated Petersburg readership by representing the restored contemplative spirituality. As such, the early *Lives* positioned Serafim as a contemporary proponent of a revived patristic spirituality that had flourished in the monasteries of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Russia.[277] Sergii writes that '[Serafim] nourished his soul by reading the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, John Climacus, Basil the Great, Ephrem the Syrian, the *Dobrotoliubie* and the works of other Holy Fathers'.[278] Georgii and Ioasaf respectively highlight Serafim's love for reading the *Dobrotoliubie* and the Church Fathers.[279] In the context of the decade of their production, marked by cultural nationalism, these references to the patristic literature of the *Dobrotoliubie* in Serafim's early *Lives* were not inadvertent but representative of a cultural environment supportive of ascetic texts. Filaret's, Makarii's and Kireevskii's projects depended on a restoration of this spirituality, and it was the symbiotic relationship between the dynamics of cultural nationalism and religious revival that would encourage the dissemination of ascetic literature such as Serafim's early *Lives*.

When studied through the lens of Casanova's theory of religious decline and revival, Russia's experience of religious revival can be conceptualised as a de-privatisation of religion, which occurred after a period of differentiation, during which its position was largely diminished and restricted to the spiritual domain despite its established status. The Alexandrine evangelical Protestant revival was itself a de-privatisation of religion, a remarkable return of religious concern as a guiding principle of power.[280] However, it was Russia's recovery of its contemplative spirituality that would

[277] Børtnes, *Visions of Glory*, pp. 108–15; George A. Maloney, 'Introduction', in *Nil Sorsky: The Complete Writings*, trans. by George A. Maloney (NJ: Paulist Press, 2003), pp. 9–27 (pp. 21–22); Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls*, pp. 145–46.
[278] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, p. 12. John Climacus, a sixth-century monastic in Sinai, was popular for the *Ladder*, a treatise on spiritual perfection and ascetic life. The Syriac writers Ephrem and Isaac were popular amongst Old Believers for their mystical interpretation of Church sacraments. See Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, pp. 25, 34, 45. Note also, Isaac the Syrian was consistently quoted extensively throughout the writings of Nil Sorskii: see Maloney, 'Introduction', p. 29.
[279] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 20; Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, p. 5.
[280] Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, p. 235.

take root and cast its influence across the nineteenth century, a de-privatisation of religion that would become a 'mobilising' and 'integrating normative force' for those cultural nationalists seeking to define Russia's unique identity and destiny.[281] Rather than just an anomaly, or representative of a reactionary and populist movement, this phenomenon accords with a conceptually modern historical possibility, witnessed in other modern nations. Serafim's early *Lives*, by representing this revived spirituality rooted in Russia's Byzantine past, placed Serafim at the heart of a modern dynamic supportive of ascetic holy figures. Just as Ioasaf reports in his *Life* that the monks of Sarov saw Serafim's love of reading patristic texts as 'an example to others',[282] these *Lives* could now serve as an example to Russia's literate laity and establish Serafim as a figure to venerate.

2. Revived Ascetic Spirituality in the Early *Lives* of Serafim

By reflecting Russia's recovered spirituality, the early *Lives* established Serafim as a hesychast: a prototype of deified humanity with contemporary relevance in the discourse of cultural nationalism in 1840s Russia. Through their representation of hesychasm, the early *Lives* established the connection between the image of Serafim and the Eastern Christian writings on contemplative practices contained in the *Dobrotoliubie* and the medieval representation of hesychasm in the *Life* of Sergii Radonezhskii and the writings of Nil Sorskii.[283] Together, these sources constitute a narrative of continuous tradition that encompassed ancient, Byzantine and Russian medieval contemplative spirituality. Assisted by the publication of his early *Lives*, Serafim became its contemporary representative and therefore a figurehead for the intellectuals promoting cultural nationalism in their decade of publication.

[281] Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, p. 227.
[282] Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, p. 5.
[283] Richard Price, 'The Canonisation of Serafim of Sarov: Piety, Prophecy and Politics in Late Imperial Russia', *Studies in Christian History*, 47 (2011), 346–64 (p. 350); Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls,* p. 32; Ware, 'St. Nikodimos and the *Philokalia*', p. 31.

Hesychasm, as a constituent part of the revived ascetic spirituality, refers to the practice of inner quietude to draw closer to God.[284] Through the practice of repetitive inner prayer, hesychasts aim to engender a vigilant, inner sobriety (*nepsis*) and a still, silence of the heart (*hesychia*).[285] They strive for union with God (*theosis*), an ideal that Kallistos Ware identifies as the 'most decisive of all the connecting threads that bind the [texts of the *Dobrotoliubie*] in unity'.[286] The *Dobrotoliubie*, as representative of this hesychasm, collected together spiritual texts written by more than twenty authors between the fourth and fourteenth centuries.[287] It was this pre-existing spirituality that was now being promoted to modern Russians of different social backgrounds who were thirsting for a contemplative spiritual life.[288]

The first published indication of Serafim's hesychasm came in his *Spiritual Instructions* (*Dukhovnye nastavleniia*) of 1839, prepared for publication by the hieromonk Sergii alongside his *Life* of the Sarov monk Mark.[289] These consist of thirty-three instructions, a number of which detail a hesychast spirituality with ancient and medieval precedents.[290] Although the *Spiritual Instructions* were attributed to Serafim, there is little conclusive evidence that they were penned by the monk himself. There does exist a short manuscript attested by Archimandrite Antonii (Medvedev, 1792–1877) as written spiritual instructions in Serafim's hand; however the published *Spiritual Instructions* were dispensed orally, copied by Sergii and other Sarov monks and collated together for publication, a process that would have given ample scope for editing and amendments.[291] Indeed, Sergii was

[284] Børtnes, *Visions of Glory*, pp. 93–94.
[285] Ware, 'St. Nikodimos and the *Philokalia*', pp. 29–30.
[286] Ibid., p. 31.
[287] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, p. 34.
[288] Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology, Part Two, Volume Five in the Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, trans. by Robert L. Nichols (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1979), p. 164.
[289] Rudi, 'Rannie zhitiia Serafima Sarovskogo', p. 428.
[290] Hieromonk Sergii, *Kratkoe nachertanie zhizni startsa sarovskoi pustyni, skhimonakha i pustynnika Marka* (Moscow: V Universitetskoi tipografii, 1839), https://dlib.rsl.ru/viewer/01003559926#?page=2 [last accessed 15 September 2019].
[291] Nichols, 'Orthodox Spirituality in Imperial Russia', pp. 27–28. Nadezhda Bekasova states that Sergii collected notes of Serafim's deeds and lessons, which were used in the preparation of his *Life* and *the Spiritual Instructions*, see Bekasova, 'Rannie zhitiinye povestvovaniia o prepodobnom Serafime Sarovskom', p. 146. See also a letter from Sergii to the Moscow Censorship Committee, dated 9 September 1838, which states that the material was collected by himself and others, including instructions given by Serafim over a fifteen-year period, in Stepashkin, *Serafim Sarovskii*, p. 246.

occupied with the publication of patristic texts during his time at Sarov, and we might conclude that on his move to Trinity-Sergius, he was encouraged by its supportive atmosphere to draw on his knowledge of the tradition of hesychasm to shape the production of his *Life*.[292]

This is not to say that the image of Serafim was constructed from thin air. Beyond the references to reading the Church Fathers and *Dobrotoliubie* in the early *Lives*, there exists evidence that Serafim had access to the *Dobrotoliubie*. One of Paisii's disciples, a monk called Nazar, retired to Sarov where he had started his monastic career. He brought with him a copy of the *Dobrotoliubie*, with which Serafim became acquainted, allowing us to trace his spirituality to the texts contained in Paisii's work.[293] However, we largely know Serafim through his *Lives*. As is the case with Sergii Radonezhskii, we are reliant on literary documents rather than primary biographical sources to piece together a picture of the saint's hesychast spirituality.[294] The hagiographical form, with its purpose to venerate and celebrate, was the perfect platform for constructing Serafim's spirituality. While we can safely assume that Serafim as a monastic would have had access to Nil's spiritual texts and the *Life* of Sergii Radonezhskii, the dynamics of publication and the adoption of the hagiographical form should be foremost in our minds when reading the early *Lives*.

Each *Life* places Serafim on a continuum that starts with the practices found in the ancient texts of the *Dobrotoliubie*. However, it is in Georgii's and Ioasaf's *Lives* that the interconnected characteristics of *nepsis* and *hesychia*, silent inner prayer and *theosis*, first suggested in Sergii's text, are fully realised. While noting the censorship history of Sergii's *Life*, we might explain the greater prominence given to hesychast themes in Georgii's and Ioasaf's *Lives* as the authors' (and editors') response to an increasing demand in the 1840s for texts containing normative principles on ascetic

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[292] Stepashkin, *Serafim Sarovskii*, pp. 245–46. Note, a comparison of the published *Spiritual Instructions* of 1839 and those contained in Chichagov's *Chronicles* reveal extensive differences, not least in additional materials from ascetic Fathers in Chichagov's text. For example, compare Instruction (6) in Sergii, *Kratkoe nachertanie zhizni startsa sarovskoi pustyni, skhimonakha i pustynnika Marka*, titled 'On Paying Heed to Oneself' (pp. 23–26). This Instruction is presented as number (8) in the *Chronicles* and is amended to include an extensive quote from Isaac the Syrian. See Chichagov, *Chronicles of the Serafimo-Diveyevo Monastery*, pp. 107–09.

[293] Louth, 'The Influence of the *Philokalia* in the Orthodox World', p. 53.

[294] Børtnes, *Visions of Glory*, p. 114.

spirituality. Quite simply, these are longer texts and the authors give greater space to Serafim's contemplative practice. The platform offered by *Maiak* opened Georgii's *Life* to an audience particularly desirous of traditional Orthodoxy and Ioasaf was surely aware of the wider ecclesiastical trend for ascetism in preparing his text for publication in 1849. Emphasis on the traditional spirituality of hesychasm in these *Lives* would connect Serafim to a historic past, but also make him a thoroughly contemporary figure, suitable for veneration by the laity. For those seeking to delineate Russia's relationship with the West, this traditional hesychasm 'constituted a clear challenge to the burgeoning hegemony of the new rationalism' conceived by the European Enlightenment.[295] In this way Serafim's early *Lives* were well positioned to police the boundaries of Orthodoxy and determine the 'right' spirituality of the Russian people.[296]

2.1. *Nepsis* and *Hesychia* in Serafim's Early *Lives*

Rowan Williams states that the dominant leitmotif of the *Dobrotoliubie* is the 'renewal of the body in the restored simplicity of the life of the Holy Spirit'; it is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit that is a guiding principle of the volume.[297] The texts of the *Dobrotoliubie* present humanity as in a fallen state, besieged by passions and irrationality, the result of a separation from God.[298] It is through attentiveness and stillness that the hesychast aims to return to humankind's natural state as intended by God: a non-passionate, non-acquisitive awareness, free from irrationality, aligned with God's perception of the world.[299] *Heyschia* refers to that inner state of stillness and silence, the defeat of those disordered passions.[300] The hesychast is encouraged to develop an inner

[295] Ruth Coates, 'Russia's Two Enlightenments: The *Philokalia* and the Accommodation of Reason in Ivan Kireevskii and Pavel Florenskii', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 91, 4 (2013), 676–702 (p. 684).
[296] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, p. 92.
[297] Rowan Williams, 'The Theological World of the *Philokalia*' in *The Philokalia: A Classic Text of Orthodox Spirituality*, pp. 102–21 (p. 110).
[298] Ibid., p. 104.
[299] Ibid., p. 105. The notion of freedom from passion is particularly developed in the work of Gregory Palamas and relates closely to the writings of John Climacus, see Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, p. 141.
[300] Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, p. 134.

watchfulness (*nepsis*) to guard the heart from disturbances of the world.[301] This notion of vigilance is conveyed in the *Life* of Sergii Radonezhskii, who the narrator says taught his monks 'to pray to God assiduously; not to talk with one another after vespers […] but to remain in their cells to privately pray to God in solitude and undertake their manual tasks as far as possible, […] having the Psalms of David on their lips all day'.[302] In his spiritual instructions, Nil Sorskii reflects this sentiment by quoting Isaac the Syrian (c. 613–c. 700): '"Distance yourself from the sight of the world and cut off any conversations. Refuse to receive in your cell any friends […] Fear to trouble your soul by any conversation which often leaves traces for a long time, even after you have terminated such a conversation"'.[303]

Developing the teaching contained in Serafim's *Spiritual Instructions*, the authors of the early *Lives* take similar care to present Serafim as an exemplar of quietude and watchful vigilance, protective of his inner calm.[304] Sergii in his *Life* writes that 'desiring to maintain silence, [Serafim] would seclude himself from visitors, or, without saying anything, he would fall to the ground, not getting up while his visitors did not leave him to his beloved silence'.[305] Brothers from Sarov would leave Serafim alone in peace, 'such was his silence and absorption in himself!'.[306] In Georgii's and Ioasaf's *Lives* the quality of this silence is further elucidated, pointing the reader to the essence of this spiritual practice. Serafim's 'silence was self-concentrated [*samouglublennoe*],' writes Georgii, 'his eyes were directed downwards; his vision was inside himself'.[307] Ioasaf writes how the Sarov brothers find him in deep, unbroken contemplation of God ('Mnogie […] nakhodili ego tam v glubochaishem, nepreryvaemom bogomyslii').[308] In both *Lives*, the silence and contemplation

[301] Ware, 'St. Nikodimos and the *Philokalia*', p. 29.
[302] 'Zhitie Sergiia Radonezhskogo', para. 117.
[303] Isaac the Syrian quoted in Nil Sorsky, in *Nil Sorsky: The Complete Writings*, p. 108. The writings of Isaac the Syrian were also included in Paisii Velichkovskii's *Dobrotoliubie*, see Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, p.34.
[304] See, for example, Instructions (6) 'On Paying Heed to Oneself' (pp. 23–26); (8) On 'Guarding the Heart' (pp. 28–29); and (26) 'On solitude and silence' (56–58) in Sergii, *Kratkoe nachertanie zhizni startsa sarovskoi pustyni, skhimonakha i pustynnika Marka*.
[305] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, p. 15. Similarly presented in Georgii's *Life*, see Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* pp. 34–35.
[306] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, p. 20.
[307] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 10.
[308] Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, p. 11.

Serafim practises is turned inwards and operates at a level of depth that excludes the world around him, a rejection of worldly vanity and chatter.

Georgii's and Ioasaf's *Lives* contain specific teachings and exhortations on silence and dispassion that echo the *Spiritual Instructions* first produced by Sergii.[309] Incorporated within the body of Georgii's *Life* are a set of short instructions, which include: 'Solitude and Prayer are great means for obtaining virtue: by cleansing the mind they give it insight', and 'the absence of passion is good'.[310] By attributing these instructions to Serafim, Georgii offers a didactic message direct to the reader on the subject of silence and inner calm: here is an example of hagiography being employed as a medium to instruct and edify. In Ioasaf's *Life*, the didactic element is presented indirectly within the context of Serafim's interactions with his visitors. Serafim pithily teaches: 'no one has ever repented of silence' ('[…] ot molchaniia nikto nikogda ne raskaivalsia').[311] Elsewhere, he posits silence as a protective salve for the believer, exhorting 'guard yourself with silence' ('Ogradi sebia molchaniem') and 'acquire a peaceful spirit' ('[…] stiazhi mirnyi dukh').[312]

In this way, the early *Lives*, particularly in Georgii's and Ioasaf's texts, raise silence to the level of a normative guiding principle for the Orthodox reader: silence is proffered as a cloak with which to protect the hesychast practitioner. As such, they observe a historic spiritual tradition with roots in an ancient and medieval past. They recall the writings of Nil Sorskii, who wrote that intimate conversation, even with close friends, disturbs the monk and is 'a great impediment to guarding the mind and hinders the mystical life'.[313] They reflect too the teachings of Isaac the Syrian, whom Nil quotes in his spiritual writing: '[…] what evil and what obstacles result from such meetings and conversations for those who sincerely live in solitude!'.[314]

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[309] See for example Instructions (3) 'On the Peace of the Soul' (pp 16–18); (4) 'On Preserving Peace of the soul' (pp. 18–22); and (9) 'On Talking Too Much' (pp. 29–31) in Sergii, *Kratkoe nachertanie zhizni startsa sarovskoi pustyni, skhimonakha i pustynnika Marka*, which emphasise silence as a state of grace protective from worldly disorder.
[310] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 29.
[311] Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, p. 11.
[312] Ibid., pp. 78–79.
[313] Sorsky, *Nil Sorsky: The Complete Writings*, p. 108.
[314] Isaac the Syrian quoted in ibid., p. 108.

2.2. The Jesus Prayer in Serafim's early *Lives*

The hesychast is equipped by spiritual tradition with a practical method to guard themselves in their pursuit of *hesychia*. The repetition of the Jesus Prayer, a method commonly associated with the works of Gregory of Sinai and Gregory Palamas in the *Dobrotoliubie*, is said to induce the acquisition of grace and life in Christ and an indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the hesychast.[315] Williams describes this practice of constant inner prayer as 'an "inscription" of watchfulness in the rhythm of the human body'.[316] Its practice corresponds with the exhortation found in I Thessalonians 5. 17 to 'pray without ceasing', and is promoted as a method to guard the heart, to burn away the 'filth' that covers the soul and restore humanity to 'its primal wholeness'.[317]

Sergii Radonezhskii is described in his *Life* as a practitioner of ceaseless prayer ('molitvy neprestannye').[318] He was the beneficiary of its spread to Russia through the second South Slav influence of the fourteenth century.[319] Nil Sorskii also promoted its use and taught his followers to 'take your mind and enclose it in your heart while you control your breathing by breathing as seldom as possible, as Symeon the New Theologian and Gregory of Sinai teach. Call on the Lord Jesus with ardent desiring and patience as you resist all thoughts'.[320] In the early nineteenth century, Serafim was represented as the latest teacher of this contemplative method. The handwritten manuscript attested by Archimandrite Antonii to be by Serafim contains the following instruction: 'Learn the mental prayer of the heart as the Fathers in the *Dobrotoliubie* teach it: for the Jesus prayer is the lamp to our paths and the pole star to heaven'.[321] The teaching is included in an expanded form in the *Spiritual Instructions* of 1839 and its practice is exemplified through the depiction of Serafim in

[315] Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, p. 141; Ware, 'The Jesus Prayer in St Gregory of Sinai', p. 12. In his own writings on the Jesus Prayer, Paisii Velichkovskii points to the importance of the Church Fathers, not least Gregory of Sinai and Gregory Palamas, see Chetverikov, *Starets Paisii Velichkovskii*, pp. 183–200.
[316] Williams, 'The Theological World of the *Philokalia*', p. 111.
[317] Kallistos Ware, *The Inner Kingdom* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000), p.75; Williams, 'The Theological World of the *Philokalia*', p. 111; Ware, 'The Jesus Prayer in St Gregory of Sinai', p. 17.
[318] 'Zhitie Sergiia Radonezhskogo', para. 72.
[319]Nichols, 'The Orthodox Elders (Startsy) of Imperial Russia', p. 5; Børtnes, *Visions of Glory*, pp. 109–16.
[320] Sorsky, *Nil Sorsky: The Complete Writings*, p. 55.
[321] Nichols, 'Orthodox Spirituality in Imperial Russia', p. 28.

the early *Lives*, albeit with greater detail in Georgii's and Ioasaf's texts.[322] The association of Serafim with the Jesus Prayer clearly came to be established in the minds of cultural nationalists such as Kireevskii, who referred to Serafim in the context of constant inner prayer in a letter in 1856 to his spiritual father, Makarii of Optina.[323]

In Sergii's *Life*, Serafim is said to keep the name of Christ 'constantly in his heart and on his lips'; we are told that he 'practises the mental Jesus Prayer' ('[…] uprazhnialsia v umnoi Iisusovoi molitve').[324] However, it is in Georgii's *Life* that the full Prayer is elucidated for the first time: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!' ('Gospodi, Iisuse Khriste, Syne Bozhii, pomilui mia greshnago!'), adopting the standard form relayed in the *Life* of Gregory of Sinai.[325] Embellishing the account of Serafim's adolescent trip to Kiev and the Caves Monastery first found in Sergii's *Life*, Georgii establishes Serafim's early relationship with the Prayer: the *starets* Dosifei sagaciously points to Sarov as Serafim's future monastery and exhorts Serafim to 'acquire a ceaseless memory of God and a ceaseless invocation of the name of God'.[326] This is a prescient lesson that guides the young monk's spiritual development and outlook in the *Life*; prayer becomes central to Serafim's spiritual practice. In words attributed to him by Georgii, Serafim quotes I Thessalonians 5. 17, teaching that 'prayer is the path to God'.[327] Significantly, Georgii describes how Serafim stood, with his hands raised, reciting the Jesus Prayer during his thousand-day vigil on the stones.[328] Given the lack of historical evidence for Serafim's Stylite feat, the author's decision to include this ascetic legend and refer to the Jesus Prayer within this context is noteworthy.[329] It is an example of the author's decision to deploy a recognisably ascetic motif, common to the hagiographic form. Within this form,

[322] Sergii, *Kratkoe nachertanie zhizni startsa sarovskoi pustyni, skhimonakha i pustynnika Marka*, pp. 34–35.
[323] Ivan Kireevskii, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii, Tom tretii* (Kaluga: Grif, 2006), p. 236.
[324] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, pp. 9, 21.
[325] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* pp. 8, 57; Ware, 'The Jesus Prayer in St Gregory of Sinai', p. 12. There are various versions of the Jesus Prayer, for example in Gregory of Sinai's own writings, he removed the text 'a sinner' from the end of the Prayer.
[326] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 8.
[327] Ibid., pp. 57–58.
[328] Ibid., p. 32.
[329] Stepashkin, *Serafim Sarovskii*, pp. 171–73.

Georgii sets the edifying message of continuous prayer, the significance of which would not have been lost on the readers of *Maiak*: in Serafim they had an exemplary figure to observe and venerate.

In Ioasaf's *Life*, Serafim's practice of the Jesus Prayer is developed within the context of a prayer rule. We learn that Serafim 'was inseparable from the Jesus Prayer' ('Molitva Iisusova takzhe byla c nim nerazluchna').[330] Significantly, Ioasaf's text recommends this contemplative practice to 'all Orthodox Christians' and Serafim's prayer rule is offered as a technique for those in the lay community.[331] Serafim teaches that the Christian, 'whatever their gender, rank or sex' should quietly recite the Jesus Prayer on their way to, and during, their business.[332] For those afflicted by worldly responsibilities, Serafim's rule suggests a shortened variant, simply 'Lord have mercy' ('Gospodi pomilui').[333] The inclusion of this 'accessible' prayer rule is noteworthy in the context of Russia's growing literacy and its ecclesiastical culture promoting ascetic texts as normative primers not reserved to the monastic elite alone: Ioasaf's *Life* is consistent with the Church's promotion of ascetism as a proper mode of life for all Orthodox Christians.

Ioasaf's *Life*, however, also illuminates Serafim's individual spiritual practice, which at first glance appears as a retreat from tradition. Departing from the classic formulation of the Jesus Prayer, Serafim teaches that after lunch and until sleep, 'Holy Mother of God, save me, a sinner' should be prayed.[334] In moments of solitude, Serafim suggests an amalgamation for prayer: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Holy Mother of God, have mercy on me, a sinner'.[335] The manuscript attested by Archimandrite Antonii also refers to the addition of Mary to the Prayer: 'To the usual Jesus Prayer add "Holy Mother of God have mercy on me"'.[336] The invocation of Mary's name variations might be explained as characteristic of Serafim's spirituality: Mary takes a special significance for Serafim, such as through her visitations in the *Lives* of Georgii and Ioasaf and her wider association with

[330] Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, p. 17.
[331] Ibid., p. 74.
[332] Ibid., p. 75.
[333] Ibid.
[334] Ibid.
[335] Ibid.
[336] Nichols, 'Orthodox Spirituality in Imperial Russia', p. 28.

Diveevo.[337] Additionality, Kallistos Ware has noted that the invocation of the Mother of God (Theotokos) is not as rare as imagined and that Marian variants of the Jesus Prayer have been historically practised.[338] During the flourishing of fourteenth-century hesychasm, Saint Maximus of Kapsokalyvia, a contemporary of Gregory of Sinai, was recorded to have said that his 'mind holds fast the memory of Jesus and of my Theotokos'.[339] Ware also points to Bishop Ignatii Brianchaninov (1807–67), who would invoke, 'Most holy Theotokos, save me a sinner'.[340] In this way, Serafim's adoption of similar alterations to the Jesus Prayer can be seen as less anomalous and instead consistent with a wider practice of the invocation of Mary, shaped through his own personal relationship with the Mother of God as depicted elsewhere in Ioasaf's *Life*. The repetitive nature of the method is key: constant prayer is proffered as a salve, a technique in which to draw closer to the divine in a world full of distraction.

2.3. *Theosis* in Serafim's Early *Lives*.

The attainment of *theosis* is the defining goal for which the hesychast strives.[341] *Theosis* is variously defined as a personal transformation by the indwelling energies of God and a restoration to wholeness and integrity through the Holy Spirit.[342] Certain ascetic Fathers, such as Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022), have said that by practising constant inner prayer, the hesychast experiences God's energy as mystical light.[343] The divine energies are said to illuminate the deified

[337] Rock, 'Following in Mary's Footsteps', p. 255.
[338] Kallistos Ware, 'The Jesus Prayer and the Mother of God', *The Eastern Churches Review*, 4 (2), (1972), 149–50 (p. 150).
[339] Ware, 'The Jesus Prayer in St Gregory of Sinai', p. 20.
[340] Ware, 'The Jesus Prayer and the Mother of God', p. 150.
[341] Ware, 'St. Nikodimos and the *Philokalia*', pp. 30–32.
[342] Norman Russell, *Fellow Workers with God: Orthodox Thinking on Theosis* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009), p. 21; Ware, 'St. Nikodimos and the *Philokalia*', p. 31. Note, Gregory Palamas made a distinction between the essence and energies of God, the essence of Whom remains ultimately unknowable. The distinction was posited to safeguard the 'truth' of God's transcendent and immanent nature. See Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, pp. 202–27.
[343] Hilarion Alfeyev, *St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 226; Russell, *Fellow Workers with God*, p. 28.

figure, reflective of the light which emanated from Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (Tabor).[344] In the wake of the second South Slav influence of the fourteenth century, this mystical light came to be vividly depicted in *Lives* such as Sergii Radonezhskii's, as well as in the iconography of the churches and monasteries of Russia.[345] In his writings, Nil Sorskii describes how in contemplative repetitive prayer 'the soul is illumined in its movements by a ray of light from on high'.[346] To further describe the indwelling of God in the hesychast, Nil quotes from Symeon the New Theologian: 'I behold a light […] glowing in the middle of the cell […]. Within my very own being I contemplate the Maker of the World and I converse with him […] and I unite myself with him as I rise upward above the heavens […]. But where my body is then I do not know'.[347] The depiction of being out of body at the end of this quotation is a descriptive marker to which we shall return below.

While Sergii's text suffered the removal of mystical elements found in later *Lives*, even in this first *Life* the concept of *theosis* is elucidated. Sergii describes how after being tonsured in 1786, Serafim 'turned away his eyes, so as to no longer to see worldly vanities […] he directed his way by inner attentiveness and mental vision of God toward the eternal sun of truth, Christ-God, Whose name he constantly held in his heart and on his lips; with a flaming zeal [Serafim] began to actively draw closer in love to the Lord, and in an active way, comprehended that love elevates our mind to God and God descends to us'.[348] This passage encapsulates each key element of hesychasm, drawing attention to the concepts of *nepsis* and *hesychia*, the practice of the Jesus Prayer and revealing a transformative personal meeting with God symbolic of *theosis* in the final lines.

The first depictions of Serafim lit by mystical light are found in Georgii's *Life*, in which he adopts motifs seen in medieval texts such as Sergii Radonezhskii's *Life*. Georgii relates an episode

[344] Nicolas Zernov, *Eastern Christendom* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1961), p. 130. See also Matthew 17. 1-8; Mark 9. 2-8; Luke 9. 28-36. Gregory Palamas, during the Byzantine revival, developed spiritual thought on the uncreated nature of the light, proposing the distinction of the energies and essence of God to explain the participatory nature experienced by the hesychast, see Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, pp. 173–76.
[345] Børtnes, *Visions of Glory*, pp. 183–93.
[346] Sorsky, *Nil Sorsky: The Complete Writings*, p. 60.
[347] Symeon the New Theologian quoted in ibid., p. 61.
[348] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, p. 9.

where Serafim encounters Christ during a liturgy, surrounded by angels 'shining with an indescribable light in the whole church'.[349] Serafim is reported to state: 'my heart was simply overjoyed, illuminated, in sweet love for the Lord' and Georgii describes how while he stood for three hours, Serafim's face changed between a snow-coloured white to 'breaking out in a flush'.[350] From being initially lit externally, the light seems to shift inside Serafim and emanate outwards, seen in the changes in his face. Similarly, in the *Life* of Sergii Radonezhskii, 'a dazzling radiance' is described as shining upon the saint, 'brighter than the sun'. In this moment the saint is said to have 'beheld the Blessed Virgin, with the two Apostles Peter and John, in ineffable glory'.[351] This experience transforms Sergii and he 'rejoiced in his soul and his face shone from that joy'.[352] As Børtnes notes in connection with this episode involving the medieval saint, 'light visions are depicted to show a gradual glorification of the figure of the saint, until the Spirit in the shape of light makes its dwelling in his heart and illuminates him from within'.[353] In reflecting this Taboric light, Georgii's *Life* locates Serafim within the same mystical tradition expressed in earlier models of saints' *Lives*.

Both Georgii and Ioasaf employ the imagery of deification within the context of spiritual conversations (*besedy*) with the brothers and sisters of Sarov-Diveevo, prefiguring the representation of transfiguration famously found in the account of Nicholas Motovilov's conversation with Serafim.[354] Georgii depicts Serafim as deified during an intimate conversation with a monk, which takes place towards the end of Serafim's life.[355] Serafim prays before an icon of the Mother of God; mystically there appears a blue light, stretching out like a ribbon and coiling onto the wick of a large wax candle, setting the wick alight. From this large flame, Serafim lights a smaller

[349] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 16.
[350] Ibid., p. 17.
[351] 'Zhitie Sergiia Radonezhskogo', para. 189.
[352] Ibid., para. 190.
[353] Børtnes, *Visions of Glory*, p. 184.
[354] *The Aim of Christian Life: The Conversation of St. Seraphim of Sarov with N. A. Motovilov,* trans. by John Phillips (Cambridge: Saints Alive Press, 2010), p. 33. During his transfiguration, Serafim says to Motovilov, 'Look, Lover of God, you and I are both now in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Why do you not look at me, poor [Serafim], in the eyes'. Motovilov responds, 'I cannot, because lightning flashes from them, and it hurts my eyes. I cannot look at you, Father [Serafim] because you are brighter than the sun'.
[355] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* pp. 60–61.

candle for the visiting brother. He tells the brother that a guest, due from Voronezh, will not see Serafim: 'do not bring him to me – he will not see me!'.[356] Throughout the conversation, Serafim's face is said to have 'radiated with a light' ('[…] litse Startsa siialo svetom.').[357] Serafim instructs the brother to stub out the candle and Serafim says, 'and so it is […] my life will go out, and they will no longer see me'.[358] The light emanating from Serafim is redolent of the Taboric light of theosis. Its use in this context serves to emphasise the sagacity of the *starets*, illumined from within, his divinely inspired countenance revealed in this moment of clarity.

In similar episodes, Ioasaf extends this imagery and adopts in his text traditional motifs found in Byzantine and medieval models of saints' *Lives* and religious writing.[359] Ioasaf recalls in his *Life* Serafim's attempts to describe his experience of a rapturous ascent to heaven. Serafim describes how he was taken up to heaven in an out of body experience that defies description ('[…] vot ia i byl voskhishchen v eti nebesnye Obiteli, tol'ko ne znaiu, c telom ili krome tela').[360] In this passage, Ioasaf introduces a reference to 2 Corinthians 12, thereby relating Serafim's experience to the vision of rapture recalled by the Apostle Paul, in which Paul describes his own rapturous ascent as 'whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— (4) [he] was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell'. This biblical reference is employed in the medieval context by Nil Sorskii, who adopts the citation in his description of the experience of mental prayer. Nil states that mental prayer leads the practitioner to know not 'whether the person is in the body or out of the body'.[361] This traditional motif points to the saintly figure's transformation, an indwelling of the Spirit that renders body and soul altered. By observing

[356] Ibid., p. 61.
[357] Ibid.
[358] Ibid.
[359] Rudi, 'Topika Russkikh zhitii', pp.78–94.
[360] Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, p. 81.
[361] Sorsky, *Nil Sorsky: The Complete Writings*, p. 60.
[361] Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls,* p. 60.

tradition, Ioasaf places Serafim's experience within a recognisable framework of *theosis* as established by historic precedent.[362]

After recalling this experience of rapture, Serafim sits silently; Ioasaf describes how 'his face gradually changed and emitted a wonderful light, and finally, shone to the point it was impossible to look at him. On his lips and in his whole expression was such joy and heavenly rapture that at that moment he could truly be called an earthly angel and a heavenly person' ('[…] zemnym angelom i nebesnym chelovekom').[363] The mystical light is explained by Ioasaf as a substitute for words and discourse, the rapturous event is instead recalled through the 'miraculous light of his face and his mysterious silence'.[364] Ioasaf's use of the *imitatio angeli* motif ('zemnoi angel i nebesnyi chelovek') introduces an image derived from Byzantine hagiography and found in the *Life* of Sergii Radonezhskii.[365] Its use emphasises the holy figure's participation in the divine: Serafim's humanity at the moment of transfiguration is transformed, he is akin to an angelic being.[366] In this way, Ioasaf provides a classic representation of a saint's transformation by union with God, depicted in a text of the modern age.

By accommodating *nepsis*, *hesychia*, inner prayer and *theosis*, being the core characteristics of hesychasm, the early *Lives* established Serafim as a contemporary exemplar of a pre-existing tradition represented in the *Life* of Sergii Radonezhskii and the writings of Nil Sorskii. The fact that each *Life* was reprinted across several editions, certain of which appended the *Spiritual Instructions*, suggests the demand for these texts was considerable.[367] The hagiographic form, free from the

[362] Note, this formulation is also used by Georgii in his *Life* during another instance of a mystical visitation, Georgii writes that 'from such visions his face changed, Serafim was seized with celestial love […] he told his disciple, 'I cannot say to you whether I was in the body or out of the body', see Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 14.
[363] Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, p. 81.
[364] Ibid., p. 81.
[365] Rudi, 'Topika Russkikh zhitii', p. 88.
[366] See also Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, p. 93, where after an act of prophecy, Serafim is described as 'like an earthly angel, his was face lit up from heavenly joy', another variant of the *imitatio angeli* motif.
[367] Stepashkin, *Serafim Sarovskii*, pp. 248, 251, 256.

conventions of biography, could be malleable to the needs of the authors in their constructions of Serafim, crucial to perfecting the image of Serafim as hesychast.

By disseminating revived ancient and medieval spiritual practices across the monasteries of Russia and beyond to the literate lay community, the *Lives* assisted in demarcating the conceptual boundaries of Orthodoxy and defining what were then considered as 'authentic' expressions of the Russian faith.[368] It was this renewed Orthodoxy that would come to provide a foundation for the development of a new national consciousness by members of Russia's clerical and cultural elite during the reign of Nicholas I. This chapter has shown how the revival of this once-forgotten contemplative spirituality fused with the project of cultural nationalism in a modern dynamic, conducive to the success of the *Lives* and for Serafim's elevation. As Chapter Three will now show, it was an elevation to national prominence that would be supported by the treatment in the *Lives* of the political nationalism propagated during the second quarter of nineteenth-century Russia.

[368] Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls*, pp. 33–36.

'[…] unto the West that which is Western, unto the East that which is Eastern.'[369]

Chapter Three

Political Nationalism in the Early *Lives* of Serafim

In 1839 Nicholas I (r. 1825–55) laid the cornerstone of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour.[370] Situated on the Moscow river, just west of the Kremlin, Constantine Thon's (1794–1881) edifice was designed to reflect the state policy of Official Nationality, to be an 'embodiment [*olitsetvoreniem*] of the socio-political ideal of Nicholas I's Russia'.[371] This policy was a romantic and reactionary attempt to recover Russia's past to maintain its autocratic status quo and it guided Nicholas's thirty-year rule and influenced the artistic and cultural productions of his reign.[372] Just as the bas-reliefs of the Cathedral established a sense of continuity with the past to promote a reactionary ideal,[373] so too could literature serve the regime.[374] In this context, the authors and editors of Serafim's early *Lives* constructed Serafim as a mouthpiece for secular power and reflected the dynamics of political nationalism associated with the age.

This chapter opens by examining Nicholas's reactionary and autocratic rule. Distilled in the troika of 'Orthodoxy [*Pravoslavie*], autocracy [*samoderzhavie*] and nationality [*narodnost'*]', this was a project of political nationalism which sought to define the Russian nation and support its claims to superiority over the West.[375] Russia's spiritual elders (*startsy*) were expected to mobilise support for

[369] Mikhail Pogodin (1800–75) in Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia,* p. 128.
[370] David B. Miller, *Saint Sergius of Radonezh, His Trinity Monastery, and the Formation of the Russian Identity* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), p. 221.
[371] E. N. Kirichenko, *Russkaia arkhitektura 1830–1910-x godov* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1978), p. 116.
[372] Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia*, p. 183; Leatherbarrow, 'Conservatism in the Age of Alexander I and Nicholas I', pp. 104–08.
[373] The cathedral incorporated a number of designs that depicted the intersection of sacred and secular power in Russian history, such as the blessing of Dmitrii Donskoi by Sergii Radonezhskii before the campaign against the Mongols and the blessing of Minin and Pozharskii by St. Dionisii before their campaign against the Poles, see Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, pp. 384–86, 399.
[374] An example of a literary response to the policy was the work produced by Fedor Tiutchev (1803–73). He associated with certain of the key supporters of Official Nationality, such as Pogodin, writing verse that reflected the conservative beliefs of these men, see Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia*, pp. 145, 150–53.
[375] Leatherbarrow, 'Conservatism in the Age of Alexander I and Nicholas I', p. 104.

this vision, and section two details the way *startsy* such as Serafim were encouraged to 'play the role of "spiritual policemen" and the guardians of the borders of Orthodoxy'.[376] The depictions in the early *Lives* of Serafim as a venerable *starets* who speaks to the hearts of visitors from across Russia's social estates would establish Serafim as a trusted voice and enable the texts to prescribe attitudes and behaviour conforming to official policy.

The final section of this chapter explores how the authors (and editors) of the early *Lives* construct an image of Serafim that validates secular power and its project of political nationalism; we see in these texts messages that support a national conception of Orthodoxy, unity of faith, and loyalty to the tsar and his imperial policy. Given the creation of an imagined community through expanding print culture and use of the vernacular Russian language, the early *Lives* were ideal vehicles for the dissemination of Official Nationality.[377] Yet, through their deference to state policy, these texts would benefit the Church as well as secular authority: just as the *Life* of Sergii Radonezhskii (1314–92) would enable his rise to national prominence as Russia's intercessor,[378] so too the depiction of Serafim's support for secular authority would be the first step in building a national cult of Serafim.

1. Reaction and Conservatism in Nicholaevan Russia

As we saw in Chapter Two, the Slavophiles supported a project of cultural nationalism that challenged the conception of autocracy developed since Peter I (r. 1682–1725).[379] Nicholas I, on the other hand, fostered a programme of political nationalism for the purpose of maintaining autocratic rule and absolute control over life in Russia.[380] Anthony Smith defines nationalism as 'an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some

[376] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, p. 102.
[377] See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, in which he explores the role of language and print technology in the development of national consciousness.
[378] Miller, *Saint Sergius of Radonezh*, pp. 63–70.
[379] Rabow-Edling, *Slavophile Thought and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism*, pp. 129–33.
[380] Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia*, pp. 266–72; Leatherbarrow, 'Conservatism in the Age of Alexander I and Nicholas I', p. 111; Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, pp. 45–46.

of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential "nation"'.[381] For the nation to survive, there must be (i) national unity; (ii) national autonomy; and (iii) national identity: goals that were mobilised, albeit superficially, by Nicholas I and his government for the defence and promotion of the Russian state.[382] While this project was a product of modernity,[383] unlike its European counterparts, the policy of Nicholas I was less a programme of civic engagement than a defensive bulwark to Russian autocracy, a rally for 'faith, tsar and fatherland' in the face of an unstable and revolutionary Europe.[384]

As Benedict Anderson states, Official Nationality 'developed after and in reaction to, the popular national movements proliferating in Europe since the 1820s'.[385] As we saw in Chapter Two, Russia's cultural elite at the turn of the nineteenth century was largely Europeanised, more conversant in French, German or English than the vernacular Russian.[386] However, shaken by the Decembrist rebellion that inaugurated his reign, Nicholas sought to narrow the window on Western influence, blaming malign foreign influence for the insurrection of 26 December 1825.[387] The rebellion presented Nicholas with an ideal opportunity to disseminate a reactionary agenda that would last throughout his reign.[388] Even as late as 1848, a year that was characterised by further unrest across Europe, Nicholas wrote that the 'disturbances' seen in France and then Germany, were 'threatening even our Russia entrusted to us by God […] but let this not be! Following the sacred example of our Orthodox forefathers, we are ready to meet our enemies'.[389]

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[381] Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2017), p. 9.
[382] Ibid., p. 9. The French revolution of 1789, commonly proposed as the birth of national politics, helped develop the notion of politically active citizens. Nationalism in this context was the result of centralising monarchs and the growing reactions and revolts to their claims, see ibid., p. 50.
[383] Ibid., p. 50.
[384] Rabow-Edling, *Slavophile Thought and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism*, p. 9; Zorin, *By Fables Alone*, p. 344; Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, pp. 45–46.
[385] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 87.
[386] Rabow-Edling, *Slavophile Thought and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism*, p. 50. This was an opinion that belonged to Vissarion Belinskii (1811–48).
[387] Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia*, pp. 32–34; Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, pp. 266, 380; Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, pp. 45–46.
[388] Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, pp. 266.
[389] Nicholas I quoted in Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia*, p. 5. Nicholas was known to be of a nervous disposition, subject to emotional crises characterised by fear and rage, see Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia*, pp. 6–8. This might best explain his attraction to a nationalism that

This reactionary 'turn' permeated Russian society and resulted in the production of cultural artefacts shaped by a nationalist vision, not least the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. In its original incarnation, the initial architect Alexander Witberg (1787–1855) had sought to capture the spirituality of the Alexandrine era (1801–25), defined by its mysticism, Protestant piety and universalism.[390] Yet its cancellation in favour of Thon's new 'national' design, was symbolic of the shift in political attitude; Thon's design would highlight, not undermine, Russia's Orthodox inheritance.[391] As the architect of Official Nationality (and the minister for education), Sergei Uvarov (1786–1855), wrote in his decennial report to Nicholas I, 'it was necessary to find the principles which form the distinctive character of Russia, and which belong only to Russia; it was necessary to gather into one whole the sacred remnants of Russian nationality and fasten to them the anchor of our salvation'.[392] Mobilising the key elements of nationalism would be key to Nicholas I's rule.

Official Nationality was first proclaimed in a court circular by Uvarov on 2 April 1833.[393] In a review of his early years of office, Uvarov wrote that 'in the midst of the rapid collapse of Europe of religious and civil institutions, at the time of a general spread of destructive ideas, at the sight of grievous phenomena surrounding us on all sides, it was necessary to establish our fatherland on firm foundations'.[394] The Russian doctrine sought to lay that foundation, to define and demarcate Russian life by inverting the French revolutionary triad of '*liberté*, *égalité*, *fraternité*'.[395] Through its infamous slogan, the policy was designed to promote national unity (Orthodoxy), national autonomy

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justified the old regime and its institutions and a thirty-year reign characterised as stagnant and bureaucratic: see Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism* (London: Methuen & Co., 1977), p. 84.

[390] Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, pp. 236–38; Batalden, *Russian Bible Wars*, pp. 13–35. Witberg wrote that the original Cathedral's 'very dedication to Christ proved' that, rather than being merely Orthodox, 'it belonged to the entirety of Christianity', a representation of the ideas of Christian universalism fashionable at that time: see Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology, Part One*, p. 168.

[391] Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, pp. 384–86.

[392] Uvarov, quoted in Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia*, p. 74.

[393] Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia*, pp. 73–78. In his role as minister for education, Uvarov would have significant influence in the propagation of Official Nationality as a guiding principle; his *Journal of the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment*, established in 1834, would be a key mouthpiece to transmitting the official policy, see Zorin, *By Fables Alone*, pp. 333–34.

[394] Uvarov quoted in Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia*, p. 74.

[395] Leatherbarrow, 'Conservatism in the Age of Alexander I and Nicholas I', p. 104; Zorin, *By Fables Alone*, p. 355.

(autocracy) and national identity (nationality), invoking Russia's pre-Petrine, Muscovite Orthodoxy.[396] However, this doctrine was provided with scarce detail and little effort was expended by its supporters to clarify its content: this was a political nationalist policy that lacked the intellectual heft brought by the Slavophiles to their project of cultural nationalism.[397] Even Official Nationality's chief progenitor was charged with failing to live up to his own maxim. Commenting on Uvarov, the historian Sergei Soloviev (1820–79) wrote: 'Orthodoxy – while he was an atheist not believing in Christ […], autocracy – while he was a liberal, nationality – although he had not read a single Russian book in his life and wrote constantly in French or in German'.[398] This seemed to be of little bother to those leading the nationalist campaign. Official Nationality was the 'inventive legerdemain' that enabled Russia 'to appear attractive in national drag'.[399]

For supporters of Official Nationality, Russia could only be understood through an Orthodox framework in which Orthodoxy was represented as the true Christian faith.[400] The confessional choice of Orthodoxy by Kievan Rus' was considered a definitive event and the religious schism with Western Europe in 1054 was productive of an 'unique' identity that had then been incubated by Russia's limited contact with the West after the Mongolian conquest of 1240.[401] The national religion could be enlisted as a bulwark to autocratic rule, albeit cynically and without much concern for the content and form of the ancient practices being recovered in Russia's monasteries.[402] Appealing to Orthodoxy would also provide a way for Nicholas to impose his vision on the official Church, not least in his demands for conformity in matters of faith, and he ensured the Church was under his

[396] Wortman, *Scenarios of Power,* pp. 395–96.
[397] Leatherbarrow, 'Conservatism in the Age of Alexander I and Nicholas I', pp. 104–08; Zorin, *By Fables Alone*, p. 328. Uvarov's ideas certainly had a basis in Romanticism, particularly the German variety, shared as an influence with the early Slavophiles, see Andrei Zorin, *By Fables Alone*, pp. 337, 340. Zorin, though, notes the strange lack of sources for the doctrine, see p. 328.
[398] Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia*, pp. 70–71.
[399] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 87.
[400] Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia*, pp. 78–96.
[401] Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, pp. 36–41; Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind, Volume One*, p. 21; Leatherbarrow, 'Conservatism in the Age of Alexander I and Nicholas I', pp. 104–05.
[402] Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia*, p. 95.

administrative control, serving the needs of the state.[403] Key figures of the official Church, likely aware of their dependency on the regime, were only too willing to support the tsar.[404]

Autocracy, as a mobilising principle, demanded this support for the tsar. Russia's autocratic rule was explained by way of the country's historical precedent and Byzantine imperial inheritance. It was justified too by the pervasive belief that the Russian people were inherently wicked and needed strong authoritarian rule.[405] In this way, it was legitimised as a Russian phenomenon, necessary 'for the existence of the country'.[406] It was also advocated by nationalist thinkers as a harmonious and unique uniting force that protected Russia from the revolutionary movements seen in Europe.[407] In this context, autocracy was linked to Orthodoxy: as Nicholas Riasanovsky wrote, 'the Russian state was indissolubly linked to that authentic form of Christianity, whereas revolution was above all anti-Christian'.[408]

It was 'nationality', however, that was the most puzzling element of the troika.[409] It would prove a nimble concept, flexible in its use depending on context, and was commonly defined by reference to the other elements of Official Nationality: the Orthodox faith and support for the tsar.[410] Yet, both Orthodoxy and autocracy were circuitously rooted in the concept of nationality through their representation of Russian faith and power.[411] This circularity had a conveniently excluding effect, not least on those who professed different beliefs or intellectual outlooks.[412] If the national religion is Orthodoxy, and the Russian subject is Orthodox, then sectarians and schismatics are naturally rejected from national life. Similarly, if nationality means acceptance of autocracy, then the republican forgoes their right to be Russian. In this way, Official Nationality could be employed

[403] Edwards, 'The System of Nicholas I in Church-State Relations', pp. 154; 166–67.
[404] For example, Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow looms large as an example of a proponent of the Church as ally to autocracy, see Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, p. 381.
[405] Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia*, pp. 99–103.
[406] Zorin, *By Fables Alone*, p. 346.
[407] Leatherbarrow, 'Conservatism in the Age of Alexander I and Nicholas I', p. 105.
[408] Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia*, p. 123.
[409] Leatherbarrow, 'Conservatism in the Age of Alexander I and Nicholas I', p. 105.
[410] Zorin, *By Fables Alone*, pp. 350–51.
[411] Ibid., p. 346.
[412] Ibid., pp. 350–51; Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, p. 267.

to expediently demarcate Russian identity and was often used as a blunt instrument to apply a brake on necessary political reform.[413]

Nicholas I called for this policy to be disseminated across society. As Vladimir Lisovskii notes, Thon's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour 'symbolised the beginning of the realisation of the tsarist government's policy, characterised by Uvarov's "triad"',[414] its design drawing attention to national victories sanctified by the Orthodox Church.[415] In a similar way, the works of hagiographers could also respond to this political demand. Key to transmitting Official Nationality was the representation of respected, trusted figures that spoke to all elements of society. Supported by the ideological developments of the Nicholaevan era, Russia's *startsy* were key actors tasked with this responsibility and were given the requisite social and ideological space to perform the role.[416] In their representations of Serafim, the early *Lives* established a recognisable model of spiritual eldership (*starchestvo*) suitable as a conduit for official policy.

2. The *Startsy* as Spiritual Policemen

It was Serafim who through a lifetime of spiritual experimentation did much to reintroduce Byzantine spiritual traditions such as *starchestvo* across Russia. In doing so, he provided 'a counterpoint to the westernizing Enlightenment of Russia's elite'.[417] *Starchestvo*'s early nineteenth-century revival was part and parcel of the renewal of ascetic spirituality discussed in Chapter Two and had its roots in the deserts of the ancient Christian faith, where hermits and novices were tightly bound in relationships of spiritual paternity.[418] Serafim was a contemporary proponent of this

[413] Zorin, *By Fables Alone*, p. 326.
[414] V. G. Lisovskii, *Natsional'nyi stil' v arkhitekture Rossii* (Moscow: Sovpadenie, 2000), p. 78.
[415] Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, pp. 384–86.
[416] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, p. 101.
[417] Nichols, 'Orthodox Spirituality in Imperial Russia', p. 38.
[418] Nichols, 'The Orthodox Elders (Startsy) of Imperial Russia', p. 4. It was Paisii Velichkovskii's model of spiritual eldership, practised at the Dragomirna and Neamt monasteries in Moldavia, which provided a blueprint for replication across Russia through the efforts of Paisii's disciples: see Nichols, 'The Orthodox Elders (Startsy) of Imperial Russia', pp. 4–5 and Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, pp. 22–24. Paisii taught himself from a repository of ancient and medieval Eastern texts contained in the libraries of Athos, later acceding to the

phenomenon and was key to its popularisation.[419] By the Nicholaevan era, the *startsy* were known as charismatic guides to Russia's pious laity, directing them on spiritual (and practical) matters; guidance was typically conducted through transformative meetings in person or written correspondence.[420] They largely occupied positions outside of the monastic hierarchy, eschewed administrative duties and were valued instead for their spiritual insight and ability to speak directly to the hearts of visitors.[421]

Through this role of spiritual direction, the *startsy* became established as mediators in society, focal points for visitors from different social backgrounds, male or female.[422] They were uniquely placed to define and shape the contours of Orthodox spirituality practised by lay Russians.[423] In this way, they acted to bridge the gap between the 'high Church' and a peasant class largely attracted to popular manifestations of the faith.[424] Irina Paert states that the '[*startsy*] were expected to perform a special role in nation-building, to actively dissociate themselves from accusation of dissent, and to demonstrate their loyalty (*blagonadezhnost'*) to autocracy and Orthodoxy'.[425] Their role in speaking directly to the masses was key to supporting Official Nationality and their unique position in society enabled them to act as mouthpieces for the policy of the tsar.

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wishes of the novices gathered around his skete to impart his knowledge to the fledgling community, see Chetverikov, *Starets Paisii Velichkovskii*, pp. 99–110.

[419] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, pp. 77–78; Nichols, 'The Orthodox Elders (Startsy) of Imperial Russia', pp. 10–12.

[420] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, pp. 85–86, 94–98, 115–18.

[421] Ibid., pp. 77–98.

[422] Ibid., pp. 94–98. Cultural figures such as Ivan Kireevskii (1806–56) and Fedor Dostoevskii (1821–81) were regular visitors to Optina Pustyn', the monastery most commonly associated with *starchestvo*, where they sought an uncontaminated Byzantine tradition of spiritual practice, see Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, pp. 75–77, 97–98, 102; Nichols, 'The Orthodox Elders (Startsy) of Imperial Russia', p. 2. Indeed, Dostoevskii's characters, such as Father Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov* and Makar Ivanovich in *The Adolescent*, owe much to Dostoevskii's interactions with the *startsy* at Optina Pustyn'. By the end of the nineteenth century, *startsy* were attracting thousands of visitors from all sections of society and even Tolstoy, an ardent critic of the official Church, viewed them as vessels of the original Christian message: 'If the Russian people have preserved the true image of the living Christ,' he wrote, 'it is only among the *startsy* that they have done so', see Nichols, 'The Orthodox Elders (Startsy) of Imperial Russia', p. 2.

[423] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, pp. 82–94.

[424] Nichols, 'The Orthodox Elders (Startsy) of Imperial Russia', p. 4.

[425] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, p. 91.

2.1. Serafim as a Model *Starets*

Just as St. Antony of Egypt (c. 251–356) returned from the wilderness 'having been initiated into divine mysteries and inspired by God',[426] Serafim is depicted as instilled with 'the knowledge of the mysteries of God, and […] an understanding of the secrets of the heart'.[427] The early *Lives* characterise Serafim by his charisma, ascetism, humility and foresight, common traits of nineteenth-century *starchestvo*: his ability to discern enables him to spiritually direct others.[428] Each text represents a model of *starchestvo* whereby visitors (and correspondents) from the outside world seek Serafim's counsel and comfort in transformative episodes of spiritual and emotional enlightenment. Here in these *Lives* is a recognisable and attractive *starets* who was constructed to deserve the veneration of his nineteenth-century readership.

In keeping with the growing contemporary interest in *starchestvo*, once Serafim opens his door to the world, he is inundated by lay believers seeking his advice.[429] Sergii writes that the numbers of 'visitors grew more and more over time. Many started to come to him from far-away places to receive blessings and useful advice from him'.[430] According to Georgii, 'those thirsting [*zhazhdushchikh*] for words of comfort numbered up to ten thousand and more',[431] while Ioasaf writes that on days of great feasts, up to five thousand and more would arrive.[432] The mix of visitors represented in the *Lives* is also reflective of the dynamics witnessed elsewhere at contemporary monasteries.[433] 'No one', Sergii writes, 'left without an instruction; rich or poor, grand or simple,

[426] Goddard Elliot, *Roads to Paradise*, pp. 44–45; *The Life of Antony*, p. 91.
[427] Nichols, 'Orthodox Spirituality in Imperial Russia', pp. 28–29.
[428] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, pp. 71–102; Nichols, 'Orthodox Spirituality in Imperial Russia', p. 29.
[429] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, pp. 94–98. Each *Life*, in its descriptions of crowds coming to Sarov, reflects the growing popularity of pilgrimage, see Nichols, 'The Orthodox Elders (Startsy) of Imperial Russia', p. 17. In this way, the early *Lives* provide a foretaste of the great pilgrimages of the late nineteenth century, when thousands would journey great distances to seek spiritual comfort and instruction at key holy sites, see Robert H. Greene, *Bodies Like Bright Stars, Saints and Relics in Orthodox Russia* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), pp. 39–72.
[430] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, p. 22.
[431] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima*, p. 44.
[432] Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, p. 17.
[433] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, p. 96.

there was enough living water for all from the mouth of humble and wretched Serafim'.[434] Visitors included 'paupers in sackcloth or rich men in fashionable clothes'.[435] According to Sergii, the first visitor to Serafim from the outside world was the governor of Tambov province, an example of a figure from the elite administrative class seeking Serafim's counsel.[436] Georgii similarly reflects Serafim's egalitarian instincts in his *Life* and Ioasaf points to the equality of Sarov's visitors in terms of 'class, title and sex' ('ravny byli san, zvanie i pol').[437]

Serafim's ministry to women is particularly illustrative of the controversial aspects of *starchestvo*. Paert notes that 'in the nineteenth century, elders were active in founding or cofounding new religious communities, which as a rule were women's communities'.[438] Female founders often consulted monks on the organisation of their communities and figures like Serafim commonly acted as spiritual advisors to religious women.[439] Such behaviour was a frequent source of criticism of individual *startsy* and often presented a challenge to Church authorities in their efforts to co-opt and contain *starchestvo*.[440] In this way, the depictions of unrest in the early *Lives* caused by Serafim's ministry to women are not atypical. On being asked by a Sarov brother why he receives 'all without distinction', Serafim points to the example of Hilarion the Great (291–371) (*Illarion Velikii*), 'who never shut his doors to wanderers'.[441] Serafim keenly worries about the spiritual welfare of these visitors (including women), who if denied, 'receiving nothing from me, will sorrowfully return

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[434] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, p. 27.
[435] Ibid., p. 26.
[436] Ibid., p. 22.
[437] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 53; Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, p. 22.
[438] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, p. 82. The Chronicles report Serafim's first and only visit to Diveevo in 1789, where he met the foundress and *staritsa*, Agafia Semenovna Melgunova. See Chichagov, *Chronicles of Seraphim-Diveyevo Monastery*, pp. 45–46. Both the *Chronicles* and Ioasaf's *Life* describe his involvement with the founding and direction of Diveevo's 'mill' community, centred around the construction of a mill, see Chichagov, *Chronicles of Seraphim-Diveyevo Monastery*, pp. 185–206; Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, pp. 64–67.
[439] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, pp. 64–68.
[440] Ibid., p. 91.
[441] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, p. 28. Georgii's *Life* similarly references Hilarion the Great, noting too that Serafim received all visitors ('postavliaia za obrazets sebe velikogo Ilariona, kotoryi prinimal vsiakogo posetitelia'), see Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 43. Hilarion was a fourth century anchorite, who was renowned for receiving visitors begging for help.

[home]'.[442] For Serafim, the matter is framed as a moral imperative; if he refuses these visitors then 'what kind of answer can [he] give to God on the Day of Judgment?'.[443]

In Ioasaf's *Life*, the rumours swirling around Sarov reach the top of the administrative hierarchy and the Hegumen of Sarov himself discusses directly with Serafim the gossip surrounding his ministry.[444] This episode highlights Serafim's singularity and independence within the monastic structure: Serafim responds to the Hegumen with an allegory, stating that 'every ship has a helmsman, who steers, guards and protects it from great abominable surges of waves or from attacks. […] Just so it is with you. You are the helmsman of this ship, so protect it from unpleasant events'.[445] The allegory acts to correct the rumours and promote the image of Serafim as a blameless figure, crucial to establishing Serafim as a worthy figure of veneration. Such an image would also have been key to assisting Ioasaf's political designs at the Diveevo convent, presented in Chapter One.

The nature of Serafim's *starchestvo* depicted in the *Lives* is illuminating and he is cast as a figure outside the norms of behaviour and social interaction, elucidated in Sergii's *Life* by a reference to Wisdom 2. 15: 'the very sight of him is a burden to us because his manner of life is unlike that of others, and his ways are strange'.[446] The early *Lives* emphasise the personal nature of Serafim's *starchestvo*, with his meetings and instructions presented as exclusive to each visitor. Sergii writes that he gave older monks beneficial advice ('poleznye sovety') and the young ones fatherly advice ('otecheskie nastavleniia') and emphasises that Serafim's counsel was given 'consistent to the needs of each' ('soobraznye trebovaniiu kazhdogo').[447] To lay visitors, Sergii writes that Serafim 'blessed those who came to him and made them a short teaching according to the spiritual needs of each.[448] Similarly, Georgii notes that Serafim gave 'appropriate instruction' ('potrebnye nastavleniia') to the

[442] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, pp. 28–29.
[443] Ibid., pp. 28–29.
[444] Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, pp. 57–58.
[445] Ibid., p. 58.
[446] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, p. 27.
[447] Ibid., pp. 12–13, 15.
[448] Ibid., p. 22.

brothers and that lay visitors were blessed 'in accordance with the needs of each' ('on vsekh blagoslovlial i pouchil, smotria po nadobnosti kazhdogo').[449] Conforming to this image of personal counsel, Ioasaf writes that 'the *starets* told the visitor that which was needed for their soul'.[450]

'The advice of the *Starets*,' Georgii writes, 'was founded on experience, his words, on grace',[451] and the *Lives* proceeded to depict Serafim as a singular character, endowed with qualities commensurate with commonly held conceptions of *starchestvo*. The description of these qualities in Sergii's and Georgii's *Lives*, indicative of their textual proximity, merit analysis side-by-side:

Sergii's *Life*	Georgii's *Life*
'Pamiat' ego byla ostraia, um ochishchennyi i dar slova obil'nyi'. Besedy ego stol' byli deistvenny i uteshitel'ny, chto vsyiakii slyshavshii onye nakhodil v nikh dushevnuiu dlia sebia pol'zu, - i nekotorye sredi sobraniia priznavalis', chto besedy ego snimali c ochei ikh kak by nekotoruiu zavesu, ozariali umy ikh svetom dukhnogo prosveshcheniia, i vozbuzhdali v dushi reshitel'nuiu peremenu na luchshee. […] Po chistote dukha svoego imel on dar prozorlivstva; inym, prezhde ob''iasnenia imi svoikh obstoiatel'stv, daval nastavleniia, priamo kloniashchimsia ko vnutrennim ikh chuvstvovaniiam i mysliam serdechnym.[452]	'Voobshche pamiat' Startsa Serafima byla ostraia, um svetlyi i dar slova v besede stol' uteshitel'nyi, chto vsiakii, slyshavshii ego, nakhodil dlia sebia dushevnuiu pol'zu, […]. Iz nikh nekotorye otkryto priznavalis', chto besedy ego snimali s glaz ikh, kak by nekuiu zavesu, ozariali um svetom dukhovnogo prosveshcheniia i vozbuzhdali v dushe reshitel'nuiu peremenu i silu na ispravlenie. […] a po daru prozorlivosti […], mnogim, prezhde vyslushivaniia ikh obstoiatel'stv, daval nastavleniia, priamo otnosivshiesia ko vnutrennim ikh chuvstvam i mysliam serdechnym.[453]

[449] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* pp. 34, 44.
[450] Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, p. 18.
[451] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 44.
[452] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, pp. 24–25.
[453] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 52.

Both accounts describe Serafim's 'sharp mind' and his 'gift for words', which in the context of the personal conversation (*beseda*) provides comfort to the visitor, who finds emotional profit in the words of the *starets*. The effect of the meeting is depicted as transformational, described as if a veil is removed from the visitor's eyes. Serafim clearly has an illuminating effect on his visitors: their minds are lit by a spiritual enlightenment, which sparks a seemingly immediate internal revolution within themselves. Meeting Serafim results in a decisive change for the better, or as Georgii describes, the 'strength for correction'. Both accounts note Serafim's gift of foresight and how he speaks directly to their 'inner feelings and thoughts of the heart'. Together, these passages emphasise the very personal nature of the meeting with Serafim. They describe an ideal of a perfect interpersonal connection that was seemingly craved by nineteenth-century Russians seeking spiritual guidance.

Ioasaf constructs a similar image in his *Life*, writing that Serafim 'blessed all and to each by the grace of God gave salvific instruction and comfort'.[454] He describes Serafim as a 'child-loving father' ('*chadoliubivyi otets*'), who speaks with a 'high degree of love and meekness' and his gift of foresight is presented as a compelling part of his *starchestvo*.[455] Ioasaf writes that 'the very thoughts [of visitors] were not hidden from the foresight of the miraculous *starets*'.[456] For example, in one episode Ioasaf shows how Serafim accurately describes the contents of sealed letters, which shocks the novice when the contents are read and correspond to Serafim's prescient descriptions.[457] His gift of foresight is also used for practical purposes. For example, Ioasaf depicts Serafim helping local peasants locate their stolen horses through using his intuition.[458] Such practical support is just as important as his spiritual advice: the horse was often the foundation to financial stability to the

[454] Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, pp. 17–18.
[455] Ibid., pp. 21–22.
[456] Ibid., p. 22.
[457] Ibid., pp. 55–56.
[458] Ibid., pp. 137–39. This episode recalls 1 Samuel 9, in which the prophet Samuel tells Saul where his lost donkeys are. In this way, Serafim is cast as a prophet in the Old Testament mould.

peasant classes. In this respect, Serafim is presented as a wonder-worker, reflecting a common attribute of *startsy* at that time.[459]

When taken together, the early *Lives* establish an image of Serafim's *starchestvo* that reflects attributes of the nineteenth-century phenomenon. A reader who had made the journey to a monastery and met a living *starets*, or who had read *Lives* or other written accounts of Russia's other well-known *startsy*, would have recognised in Serafim an authentic figure to venerate: a timeless *starets* with his roots in ancient Orthodoxy. In an era of expanding literacy, the *Lives* would have been a key tool in the Church's response to state policy in their emphasis on the Orthodox Church and the tsar as emblematic of Russianness.[460] In this way, through his elevation in the *Lives* as a trusted, authoritative and compelling *starets*, Serafim could act as a suitable mouthpiece for authority, a 'spiritual policeman' to demarcate the borders of Russian identity through the teachings of his early *Lives*.

3. Serafim as Spiritual Policeman

Given the interests of those involved in publishing the early *Lives*, there are plausible explanations for why these texts respond to the demands of the government's policy of Official Nationality. Richard Wortman notes that it was Metropolitan Filaret who 'disseminated the notion of the historical role of the Orthodox Church as an ally of autocracy and the saviour of Russia'.[461] This goes some way to explain the shadow cast by Official Nationality on the works by Sergii and Georgii, each of which was produced in the supportive environment of Trinity-Sergius. The pronounced aspects of this ideology in Georgii's text can also be attributed to its publication in *Maiak*, a journal known to be 'fantastically reactionary, obscurantist, and nationalist' and a key platform for the dissemination

[459] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, p. 102.
[460] Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, p. 214.
[461] Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, p. 381.

of the policy of Official Nationality.[462] Ioasaf's *Life*, while seemingly produced without official ecclesiastical support, benefited from the author's connection with the imperial family. The support for autocracy, developed across several episodes in Ioasaf's text, is a function of the author's desire to appeal to the aristocracy and gain support for his organisational plans at Diveevo.

Since Official Nationality was not a precisely defined formula, it is not surprising that the early *Lives* do not respond to its 'tenets' in a systematic or programmatic way. Instead they largely focus on lessons that relate to the 'Orthodoxy' and 'autocracy' elements, corresponding to the contents of other 'cheap' or pamphlet literature produced in the era.[463] As noted earlier, 'nationality' was the more puzzling element of the troika and its presence in the early *Lives* is inferred by reference to the national religion and the defence of autocracy, rather than direct statements. Through depictions of his *starchestvo* with lay visitors, or reports of his exhortations, the image of Serafim in the *Lives* is used to make defining statements on the nature of Russia's national faith and secular power that accord with the needs of the tsarist regime. However, not only did they serve to benefit the state, they also helped develop a national cult of Serafim that in due course would assist the Church, whether as a source of income from pilgrimages at Diveevo or as an ideological symbol to mobilise Russia's spiritual awakening.

3.1. Orthodoxy

In his decennial report, Uvarov wrote that 'a Russian, devoted to his fatherland, will agree as little to the loss of a single dogma of our Orthodoxy as to the theft of a single pearl from the Tsar's

[462] Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia*, p. 76. Other platforms included *Moskvitianin*, which published the *Life* of Paisii Velichkovskii, evidence itself of how *Lives* were commonly distributed in these 'nationalist' journals: see Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, p. 100. While *Moskvitianin* gave a platform to the hesychasm promoted by Ivan Kireevskii, it also printed articles on Official Nationality; the founder of *Moskvitianin* was Mikhail Pogodin (1800–75), a key proponent of Official Nationality, see Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia*, pp. 52–55. For example, the first edition contained an article by Stepan Shevyrev (1806–64), which stated that Russians had preserved 'in their purity, three fundamental feelings which contain the seed and the guarantee of our future development. We have retained our ancient religious feeling. […] our state unity […] our consciousness of our nationality', see Shevyrev quoted in Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia*, pp. 75–76.

[463] Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, p. 214.

Crown'.[464] It is debatable whether there was any truth to this statement. However, it is indicative of the common desire of both state and Church to impose unity of belief over a national religion that had deeply heterodox tendencies.[465] The early *Lives* present Serafim as a defender of purity in faith, a religion uncontaminated by foreign influence and unified in the face of sectarianism. Sergii, for example, writes that Serafim 'exhorted [his visitors] to stand firmly for the truths of Eastern Church dogma'.[466] This same sentiment is reflected by Georgii as: 'he implored [his visitors] to defend the truths of Orthodox dogma of the Eastern Church' ('umolial zashchishchat' istinu dogmatov Pravoslaviia Vostochnoi Tserkvi').[467] This defence of Orthodoxy in both accounts is emphasised by their authors' exemplary references to Mark of Ephesus (1392–44), a hesychast theologian who famously refused to assent to doctrinal compromise concerning the *filioque* at the council of Florence (1439).[468] Both texts hereby observe Orthodox tradition and establish a comparison between the holy figures; here Serafim is shown to echo Mark, a pillar of the Church, in his defence of Orthodox dogma and an 'uncorrupted' faith.[469] While Sergii presents Mark as defender of the 'Eastern Catholic faith' ('v zashchite Vostochno-Kafolicheskoi very'), Georgii describes him as defender of the 'Eastern Greek Church' ('v zashchishchenii Grekovostochnoi Tserkvi').[470] This development between the texts highlights the Greek/Byzantine provenance of the Russian faith, which in turn points the reader to Orthodoxy's roots and its defining characteristic as the national faith.

The early *Lives* position Serafim as an apologist for Orthodoxy, a figure who is partisan in his love for the national faith. Georgii, for example, writes that Serafim 'often expressed his love for

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[464] Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia*, pp. 74–75.
[465] Freeze, 'Institutionalizing Piety' pp. 215–24. Edwards, 'The System of Nicholas I in Church-State Relations'.
[466] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, p. 25.
[467] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 54.
[468] Edward Siecienski, *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 252–72.
[469] Serafim's reference (and by implication, association) to the historic figure of Mark of Ephesus becomes settled in the later *Lives* of Serafim, such as in Chichagov's chronicles, see Chichagov, *Chronicles of Seraphim-Diveyevo Monastery*, p. 179.
[470] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, p. 25; Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 54.

Orthodoxy in sweet and instructive conversations' ('Liubov' svoiu k Pravoslaviiu on chasto vyrazhal v besedakh sladkikh i pouchitel'nykh').[471] Significantly, the *beseda*, a defining feature of *starchestvo*, is used to express his love for the national confession rather than toward Christianity more generally. Georgii presents Serafim's use of the *beseda* in his *Life* as a forum to convert visitors from non-Orthodox denominations. In one instance, Serafim greets visitors described by Georgii as from the aristocratic and fashionable set ('dva svetskie cheloveka'), one of whom is non-Orthodox.[472] Using his gift of foresight, Serafim notes that it is the business of the monastery to teach people like them and the non-Orthodox visitor steps forward in surprise and acknowledges that he is a pastor of the Western Church ('ia pastyr' Zapadnoi Tserkvi').[473] This visitor, perhaps a pietist of the Alexandrine era, converts to Orthodoxy through this meeting with Serafim; here Serafim is presented as a missionary for Orthodoxy, a catalyst for a transformative conversion to the national religion.

In their efforts to steer their readers toward native images of sainthood, Sergii and Georgii include references to holy figures who are proffered as definitive of the faith. Serafim is said to love 'Russian Saints' (Rossiiskie Sviatye)' and by listing Dmitrii Rostovskii (1651–1709), Stefan Permskii (1340–96), Sergii Radonezhskii (and the 'Metropolitans of Moscow' in Georgii's text), the authors explicitly refer to national figures who are remembered for shaping Orthodoxy and/or supporting the emerging state.[474] Sergii's and Georgii's use of *rossiiskii* alludes to the Russian state and its imperial territory, rather than Russian ethnicity (*russkii*) and therefore reflects the semantic differentiation between the adjectives of Russianness which developed after the reforms of Peter I. The split in meaning mirrored the growth from the eighteenth century onwards of a national

[471] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 54.
[472] Ibid., p. 50.
[473] Ibid., pp. 50–52.
[474] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, p. 25; Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 53. Dmitrii Rostovskii was responsible for one of the most popular compilations of saints' *Lives* (*Menaea*), see Ziolkowski, *Hagiography and Modern Russian Literature*, p. 20. Stefan Permskii was a key missionary of Orthodoxy, converting pagans in the Permian lands and unwittingly opening the door to Russification, see G. P. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind, Volume Two: The Middle Ages, The Thirteenth to the Fifteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 230–45. Sergii Radonezhskii we already know in his representation as intercessor for medieval Rus', see Miller, *Saint Sergius of Radonezh,* pp. 76–104.

consciousness and the creation of a vocabulary that illuminated a nascent sense of statehood.[475] The use in these texts of a term that relates to the multi-ethnic empire is noteworthy, not least in the context of the authors' attempts to define a unified national Church. Orthodoxy in this case appears as representative of the whole state, not just its ethnic Russian element.

Unity was a major concern for a national Church that was still riven by the schism that resulted from Patriarch Nikon's (1605–81) reforms of the seventeenth century.[476] Bringing Old Believers back to the fold, or at least co-opting such expressions of popular piety, was of utmost importance in the context of Nicholas I's professed desire for Church unity.[477] Serafim's meeting with four Old Believers, introduced in Georgii's *Life* and referred to by Ioasaf, is a definitive episode that illustrates Serafim's support for a unified national religion.[478] Serafim intuits the question on the Old Believers' lips, which as anticipated relates to the correct way to perform the sign of the cross. Taking the right hand of the first Old Believer, Serafim places his fingers into a three-fingered 'Orthodox' sign and crosses him with his hand. Serafim says to him: 'that is the Christian sign of the Cross' ('Vot Khristianskoe slozhenie Kresta').[479] He pleads with them to 'join the Greco-Russian Church' ('[…] proshu i moliu vas, khodite v Tserkov' Grekorossiiskuiu')[480] and provides the following allegory of the relationship between the official Church and the sect, explaining that the Orthodox Church

> is like a ship, with lots of rigging, sails and a great helm, which is guided by the Holy Spirit and carries inside teachers and shepherds in succession to the apostles; your chapel is like a little boat, without a rudder and oars, attached by a rope to our Church, sailing behind, swamped by waves – it would drown if it was not connected to the ship.[481]

[475] Alexander I. Grishchenko, 'Rus'—Rossiia, and russkie—rossiiane, and russkii—rossiiskii in the *Catalogue of the Kievan Metropolitans* by St. Demetrius of Rostov' in *Slovene*, 1 (2014), 102–19; Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917* (London: HarperCollins, 1998), p. xix.
[476] Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, pp. 168–74; Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology, Part One*, p. 93–104.
[477] Freeze, 'Institutionalizing Piety', pp. 215–21, 231–35.
[478] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* pp. 48–49; Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, pp. viii–ix.
[479] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 49.
[480] Ibid.
[481] Ibid.

This passage is a cogent example of the representation of Serafim as mouthpiece for official policy, guiding readers toward the Orthodox faith. It is also illustrative of the concern about this specific sect in post-Napoleonic Russia, when there was 'incontrovertible evidence of an explosion in the number of Old Believers and sectarians'.[482] Official Church figures, such as Metropolitan Filaret, were worried about growth in dissent and were keen to catechise and provide simple instruction to such schismatics.[483] Serafim was particularly suitable for conveying this message to the readership. While the veracity of the account in Georgii's *Life* cannot be proved, it is highly likely that Serafim met Old Believers in the forest of Sarov: Nizhegorodskaia Oblast' was well known to have large numbers of adherents of the breakaway sect.[484] Evidence also suggests that Serafim came from a family that practised rituals associated with Old Believers, and Sarov itself was known for its use of prayer copies (*lestovka*) and liturgical music inspired by the sect.[485] Serafim was an ideal voice to bridge the gap between Church and dissenters, an example of the co-option of local popular piety for the sake of wider unity.[486]

Serafim's partisan support for Orthodoxy, however, is often depicted in ways that contradict the image of Serafim's *starchestvo* as constructed elsewhere in the *Lives*. While on the one hand Serafim is said to welcome all, including sinners who have fallen far from faith,[487] elsewhere he is shown aggressively to refuse non-Orthodox visitors, most prominently in Ioasaf's *Life*. Ioasaf writes that Serafim did not receive 'those whom he saw were complete apostates from the Orthodox Church and in whom he noted no repentance'.[488] In one episode, Ioasaf describes a wanderer (*strannik*) seeking a blessing from Serafim.[489] Yet this visitor is turned away because, in Serafim's

[482] Freeze, 'Institutionalizing Piety', p. 231.
[483] Freeze, 'The Rechristianization of Russia', pp. 107–08.
[484] Freeze, 'Institutionalizing Piety', p. 248.
[485] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, p. 46.
[486] Freeze, 'Institutionalizing Piety', pp. 215–33.
[487] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, pp. 26–27; Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 53.
[488] Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, p. 22.
[489] Ibid., pp. 47–50.

words, he is a charlatan (*pritvorshchik*).[490] Even when asked a second time to bless the *strannik*, Serafim refuses, saying he is the 'the most unhappy, the most lost'.[491] This is immediately contrasted by Serafim's willing acceptance of another *strannik*, whom Serafim advises to stop wandering and to return home to his family.[492] Here Serafim is depicted as exercising discernment in whom he accepts: while the second *strannik* is received and gains 'all he wished, namely he learnt his real path' ('poluchil vse zhelaemoe, t. e. uznal nastoiashchii put' svoi'),[493] the first (for no obvious reason) is labelled a charlatan and barred from the *starets*. Serafim has a conception of what an Orthodox believer looks like and rejects those who diverge from this vision. When this episode is placed within the context of the wider *Life*, the reader is being taught a conception of the 'true' nature of Orthodoxy and a message of obedience that accords with the demands of the state.

3.2. Autocracy

During the Nicholaevan era, the Orthodox Church was mobilised as the custodian of the national past, thereby protecting the autocratic regime from the political ideas spreading from the West.[494] The depictions of Serafim's support for autocratic power, with greater emphasis in Georgii's and Ioasaf's *Lives*, can be seen as weapons in the armoury of the Church's defence of tsar and country. As Georgii reports in his *Life*, Serafim exhorts the faithful to 'love the holy and orthodox Church, […]; may truth be armour to us, piety the shield of salvation. With them Russia will be glorious, strong and invincible, and the gates of hell with not prevail against us' ('Vozliubim Tserkov' sviatuiu i pravoslavnuiu […]; da budet pravda nam v broniu i blagochestie v shchit spasenie. Imi Rossiia budet slavna, krepka i neoborima, i vrata adovy ne odoleiut nas!').[495] Here the Church is presented as national saviour and guarantor. By quoting from Matthew 16. 18 ('and the gates of hell shall not

[490] Ibid., p. 48.
[491] Ibid.
[492] Ibid., pp. 48–50.
[493] Ibid., p. 49.
[494] Wortman, *Scenarios of Power,* pp. 402–04.
[495] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 48.

prevail against it'), where Jesus describes the Church he will build and in which Peter will play a crucial role, Serafim's exhortation implies that the Orthodox Church is 'the' church founded by Christ and Russia is therefore safeguarding the work of Christ: Serafim's support for the state is divinely sanctioned. Elsewhere, Georgii writes that Serafim's 'whole life was dedicated to feats of good and prayer for the salvation of close ones and the Russian tsardom' ('[…] vsia zhizn' byla posviashchena podvigam dobra i molitvam o spasenii blizhnikh i Tsarstva Russkogo.').[496] In this instance, Georgii adopts the ethnic variant of Russianness by employing the adjective *russkii*, an illustration of the use of nationality as a concept that has potential to exclude. Serafim's prayer for salvation in this instance connotes the pre-Petrine era, when the tsardom (as opposed to empire) was indeed ethnically Russian; his prayer does not take into account the empire's multi-ethnic dimensions.[497] Here the labile nature of Official Nationality is reflected in the text.

Serafim's defence of autocracy, and therefore of the nation, is depicted by Ioasaf in an episode titled 'On father Serafim's army visitor', which is situated in the context of the Decembrist revolt. Ioasaf describes a visit by a soldier who seeks Serafim's blessing, stating that the meeting occurred 'immediately before that very time when hostile spite took up arms against the holy Tsarist power and orchestrated unrest and insurrection in Saint Petersburg' ('Eto sluchilos' pered tem samym vremenem, kogda vrazheskaia zloba vooruzhilas' protiv sviashchennoi vlasti Tsarskoi i proizvela smiatenie i bunt v S. Peterburge').[498] The soldier admits to Serafim that he does not observe the Russian national confession ('Ia ne rossiiskogo ispovedaniia').[499] Again, the use of 'rossiiskii' within the text is significant, imputing to the faith dimensions that are national as opposed to purely ethnic. The soldier's admission of his non-Orthodox faith elicits anger from Serafim, who exhorts the soldier to leave, shouting at him when he tries a second time to receive a blessing.

[496] Ibid., p. 4.
[497] Michael Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People: Studies in Russian Myths* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), pp. 101–27.
[498] Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, p. 50.
[499] Ibid., p. 51.

Serafim treats the solider as 'the greatest enemy and apostate of the Church'.[500] Unlike the case of the 'charlatan' *strannik*, Serafim is clear why this soldier is denied his blessing. Serafim points to a spring, in which he reportedly can see the kind of man the soldier was. 'Take a look', Serafim is reported to say, 'at how stirred-up this spring is, this is the way this man who visited wants to stir up Russia' ('Vot vidish', kak vozmushchen etot istochnik, tak-to etot chelovek, kotoryi prikhodil, khochet vozmutit' Rossiiu').[501] His insight is proved right: there is an uprising, albeit impeded by God's intervention according to Serafim.[502]

In this way, Serafim is presented as a contemporary intercessor for Russia, comparable to the representation of Sergii Radonezhskii in his *Lives*. These texts established the medieval saint as guarantor of Russian security through the depiction of his blessing of Grand Prince Dmitrii of Moscow before his battle against the Mongols at Kulikovo field.[503] Not included in the first copies of the *Life*, the depictions of the intercession in later editions and by other hagiographers formed the basis of the cult surrounding Sergii.[504] The representation of state and Church contact was of mutual benefit, a dynamic that could sanctify the acts of secular power, while raising the saint to national prominence. With respect to Ioasaf's *Life*, the episode with the Decembrist inaugurates a reciprocal dynamic that binds Serafim to the historic institution of autocracy; Serafim sanctifies worldly power and in turn benefits from a cult and national prominence, the endpoint of which is Nicholas II's (r. 1894–1917) support for Serafim's canonisation.[505]

Georgii's *Life* similarly includes episodes that act as direct support to the secular state, this time within the context of ministering to visitors to Sarov during a cholera epidemic in 1830.[506] Many

[500] Ibid., p. 51–52.
[501] Ibid., p. 53.
[502] Ibid.
[503] In the 'Tale of the Battle with Mamai' (*Skazanie o Mamaevom Poboishche*), the hagiographer writes that 'Dmitrii came to saint Sergii because of the great faith he had in the *starets*', see 'Zhitie Sergiia Radonezhskogo', para. 179.
[504] Miller, *Saint Sergius of Radonezh*, pp. 63–70.
[505] Freeze, 'Subversive Piety'; Nichols, 'Orthodox Spirituality in Imperial Russia'; Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, pp. 164–67.
[506] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 57.

visitors are described arriving at the monastery during this crisis to seek prayers and advice from Serafim on this deadly disease (*smertonosnaia bolezn'*). Paert notes that 'in response to the European revolutions of the 1830s and cholera riots in 1831, the Russian autocracy mobilized the Orthodox moral categories of obedience and humility and presented them as the spiritual qualities of the nation'.[507] In this episode in Georgii's *Life*, Serafim instructs visitors to the monastery to 'call out the name of the Lord, and save ourselves'.[508] The text references Psalm 37, which in verse 5 exhorts: 'commit your way to the Lord; trust in him […]'. In the context of this episode, Serafim also teaches the recitation of the Jesus Prayer, stating that 'those who do this, in simplicity and faith, will be saved'.[509] Georgii's *Life* in this instance represents Serafim's teaching as a response to the state's mobilisation of obedience and humility; he is providing a balm to distressed peasants whose suffering could easily lead to revolt if not appropriately contained. Likewise, the dissemination of prayer as a protective balm that secures the state is developed by Georgii in his depiction of a visit from a soldier who has fought in the Turkish campaigns.[510] Georgii reports that because of Serafim's prayers, and the blessing and holy bread given to him by the *starets*, the soldier is protected in his mission: 'God kept me unharmed from [these] enemies' ('Bog sokhranil menia ot vragov nevredimym!').[511] By teaching peasants and soldiers the power of prayer, Serafim serves as a mediator for secular power, who ensures the state is maintained and not harmed by unrest or failed military campaigns.

The *Lives* also present reciprocal support (financial and otherwise) for Serafim through the depiction of patronage by figures of secular power. The visit by the Governor of Tambov reported in Sergii's *Life* is the first expression of 'official' secular interest in Serafim; its inclusion provides a boost to claims of Serafim's local fame and notoriety.[512] More noteworthy is the visit to Serafim in 1826

[507] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, p. 90.
[508] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* p. 57.
[509] Ibid., 57.
[510] Ibid., p. 50.
[511] Ibid., p. 50.
[512] Sergii, *Skazanie o zhizni i podvigakh blazhennyia pamiati ottsa Serafima*, p. 22.

reported by Georgii of Grand Duke (*Velikii Kniaz'*) Mikhail Pavlovich (1798–1849), younger brother of Nicholas I. He is described as travelling through Penza and Tambov at that time and said to have 'revered *starets* Serafim, accepting a blessing from him'.[513] There is scant proof for this visit, although archival evidence suggests the Grand Duke was in Penza and Tambov in 1817.[514] However, the benefit of describing such a visit (true or not) is obvious: Serafim is legitimised as worthy of veneration by a representative of tsarist power and in turn legitimises secular power by blessing the Grand Duke. Additionally, a visit in 1826 has extra significance: during that year the Grand Duke was serving on the investigative committee of the failed Decembrist uprising.[515] It could be inferred that Georgii or the editors of his *Life* knowingly made this reference, as an evocation of autocratic secular power rooting out its opponents.

Unsurprisingly given his connection, the support of the imperial family is presented with especial emphasis in Ioasaf's *Life*. In this text, the organisational and material support offered by Nicholas I and his family is explicitly detailed, predicted by Serafim during his life and forthcoming after his death. Serafim sagaciously pronounces that in 1842, the separated Kazan and Mill communities at Diveevo will be joined, saying, 'be patient, be patient, thanks be to God […], you will have such joy, that in the middle of summer you will break into a Paschal [hymn]'.[516] After Serafim's death, Ioasaf reports the promulgation of an Order of the Holy Synod dated 27 June 1842 to join the separate communities, expressed to be the will of Nicholas I.[517] When the amalgamation occurs, the nuns of Diveevo offer a thanksgiving to the health of the 'Tsar's most August Family and the Holy Synod'.[518] The connection between Serafim, Diveevo and the imperial family is emphasised throughout: Serafim is reported often to tell the Mother Superior at Diveevo, 'Matushka, the earthy Tsar will not deprive you of his benevolence and all the imperial family will visit you in their

[513] Georgii, *Skazaniia o zhizni i podvigakh startsa Serafima,* pp. 44–45.
[514] Stepashkin, *Serafim Sarovskii*, p. 190.
[515] Nichols, 'Orthodox Spirituality in Imperial Russia', p. 23.
[516] Ioasaf, *Skazaniia o podvigakh i sobytiiakh zhizni startsa Serafima*, p. 102.
[517] Ibid.
[518] Ibid.

mercy'.[519] Indeed, the imperial family are described as the first benefactors of the convent, described again by Ioasaf as the most August Family (*Avgusteishaia Familiia*).[520] The explicit support of the tsar and imperial family is unsurprising in the context of Ioasaf's relationship with the imperial family and his personal intentions at Diveevo, as discussed in Chapter One. His *Life* was even presented to the family alongside copies of his monarchist poems.[521] Clearly Ioasaf was key to establishing the connection between Serafim and the imperial family. In particular, Grand Duchess Mariia, the favourite daughter of Nicholas I, 'who shared her father's allegiance to the formula of "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality"', became particularly interested in Serafim.[522] Her patronage surely helped establish Serafim as a *starets* worthy of veneration, the support benefitting Sarov-Diveevo with increasing fame, financial support and a growing stream of pilgrims leading to visits by Nicholas II himself.[523] Indeed, there is evidence that Mariia was instrumental in guiding the text through censorship, a further example of secular power assisting the elevation of a saintly figure.[524] While the depiction in this episode in his *Life* was key to establishing Ioasaf's own claims at Diveevo, it would prove fundamental to inaugurating Serafim's cult, supported by the autocratic regime.

The early *Lives* were emblematic of the national turn in Nicholaevan Russia, much in the same way as the paintings and bas-reliefs were in Nicholas I's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. One such design was a prominent image of Sergii Radonezhskii blessing Dmitrii Donskoi before his battle at Kulikovo.[525] This was architecture as a political statement, an attempt to define Russian statehood by reference to its Orthodox past. In their representation of a timeless *starets*, the early *Lives* likewise drew on tradition, albeit with especial contemporary relevance. They represented, in hagiographical

[519] Ibid., p. 105.
[520] Ibid., pp. 106–07. Note, in using the designation 'most August', Ioasaf mimics its common use in relation to both tsar and imperial family seen in publicly distributed official documents and in commentary on the tsar contained in the press of that era. See Zorin, *By Fables Alone*, p. 344; Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, p. 286.
[521] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, p. 101.
[522] Ibid., p. 101.
[523] Price, 'The Canonisation of Serafim of Sarov'.
[524] Paert, *Spiritual Elders*, p. 101.
[525] Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, p. 386; Miller, *Saint Sergius of Radonezh*, p. 221.

form, aspects of the policy of Official Nationality, thereby guiding their readership along the contours of national life, which had been etched by the government for political expediency. Nicholas's project of political nationalism was an attempt to stamp his authority on society and to shore up support for the Romanov regime, a tendency marked in the early *Lives*. Those involved in the publication of the early *Lives* knowingly used the archaic literary form to respond to the demands of politics and sanctify the messages contained within their narratives. Yet they also seized this opportunity to elevate Serafim, capitalising on a culture encouraging of such representations of sainthood. Just as for Sergii Radonezhskii in the medieval era, Serafim's early *Lives* were key to establishing Serafim as a candidate for national sainthood, a role intended to benefit both Church and state.

Conclusion

Merezhkovskii suggests in *Poslednii sviatoi*, his essay of 1908, that Serafim was not of this world: he 'did not have his own life', Merezhkovskii writes, 'rather, he had only a "saints' *Life*"'.[526] It is a sentiment that touches on the notion of Serafim as a constructed figure, a saint who was presented to modern readers as an archaic, other-worldly, being. Just like their medieval counterparts, Serafim's early *Lives* supported a cult of a saint that enabled the fame of an obscure holy figure to spread beyond the bounds of their locality.[527] They did so by speaking to the culture and times in which they were produced. This dissertation has examined Serafim's early *Lives* as products of modernity, finding within them the seeds of his construction as a figure of contemporary relevance to nineteenth-century Russia. The early *Lives* elevated Serafim far beyond the forests of Tambov region and created an image that in less than a century after his death enabled his canonisation as a national saint by the imperial family of Nicholas II.

Sergii, Georgii and Ioasaf, as their immediate authors, each created the image of Serafim by consciously adopting an archaic literary form and employing traditional ascetic narratives and motifs. This was of fundamental importance to constructing a saint that was recognisable and acceptable to readers as a figure for veneration. This 'traditional' image was also key to supporting the interests of those involved in their production. The early *Lives*, as has been shown, were the products of various figures with competing interests and these texts acted as sites of contested authority, whether related to the promotion of ascetic ideology (Sergii's and Georgii's *Lives*) or the political settlement of Diveevo (Ioasaf's *Life*). Those early supporters of the *Lives* would be key to promoting and spreading Serafim's fame.

Rather than being mere re-productions of historic models, the early *Lives* also reflected the prevailing dynamics of modernity to establish Serafim as a modern saint of the Nicholaevan era: these were not texts produced within a vacuum and their creation owes much to the demands of

[526] Merezhkovskii, 'Poslednii sviatoi', p. 144.
[527] Børtnes, *Visions of Glory*, p. 12.

the culture in which they were published. They depicted the recovered tradition of Orthodox contemplative monasticism and responded to contemporary cultural and political concerns, namely the competing conceptions of cultural and political nationalism. A key function of a saints' *Life* is to edify, and those involved in their production ensured that the early *Lives* acted as more than just mere conduits of simple biblical 'truth'.[528]

Nineteenth-century Russian modernity consisted in the symbiotic relationship of faith and nation, a dynamic productive for casting Serafim, in the words of Kallistos Ware, as 'physician to all Russia'.[529] Through the early *Lives*, Serafim was posited as a standard-bearer of a revived ascetic spirituality that enjoined his image to a tradition represented in medieval Russia by figures such as Sergii Radonezhskii and Nil Sorskii. This renewal of spirituality, with its roots in Byzantine Christianity, was definitive in the development of nineteenth-century conceptions of the nation. For the cultural nationalists, represented by figures such as Metropolitan Filaret and Kireevskii, the restored tradition revealed the essence of Russia's historic mission and was a source for national rebirth. For the government's project of political nationalism, the image of a historic Russian Orthodox faith, even if stripped of its theological depth and nuance, was a buttress to the integrity of the state and autocratic rule. Serafim, through his traditional representation, was well-positioned to act as mouthpiece for an autocratic tsar.

In this way, Serafim's cult developed to benefit all those interested in his elevation. Cultural and political nationalists were provided, through the *Lives*, with an authentic, usable figure in their divergent projects of nationalism. The Church established a cult of Serafim, which could be mobilised for dogmatic ends and which for Sarov would ensure mass pilgrimage. As an expression of the cultural and political nationalism of Nicholaevan Russia, it is through the publication of these *Lives* that Serafim's trajectory toward sainthood begins and his defining image as a national figure is first

[528] Delahaye, *The Legends of the Saints*, p. 2.
[529] Ware, 'Introduction', pp. xxxvi–xxxvii.

conceived. It is this construction that anticipated Serafim's significance to imperial rule in its final years of power, before revolution swept it and much of Orthodox culture away.

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